

LIVING WITHIN

THE YOGA APPROACH TO
PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND GROWTH



SELECTIONS FROM THE WORKS OF
SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

COMPILED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY A. S. DALAL

BOOKS BY A. S. DALAL

Living Within: The Yoga Approach to Psychological Health and Growth

(Compiled, with an Introduction, from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother)

The Psychic Being: Soul – Its Nature, Mission and Evolution

(Selections from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother)

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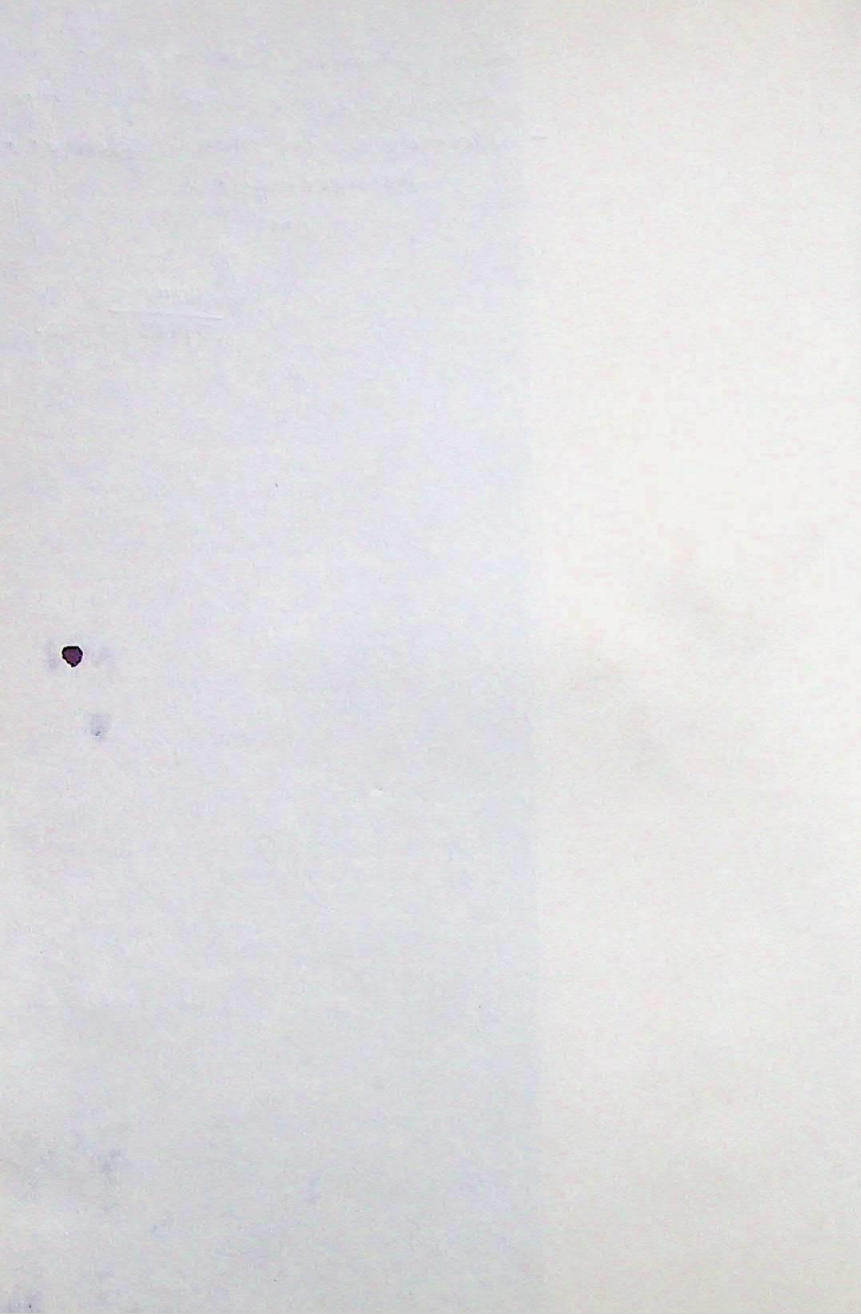
Living Words

(Gleanings from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother)

With heart felt regards
Gratitude & Lots of Congrat-
-ulations on Your greatest
Achievement.

OM

msmatt
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Selections from the Works of
SRI AUROBINDO
and
THE MOTHER

Compiled with an Introduction by
A. S. Dalal

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
PONDICHERRY

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Publisher's Note

This compilation, consisting of extracts from the published works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, is based on research into the implications of Integral Yoga for mental health and psychological growth. In order to relate the material contained in this book to present-day understanding about mental health, the terms and concepts commonly used in the field of mental health have been utilised in captioning and classifying the extracts where possible.

Sources from which the passages have been extracted are mentioned in the list of references at the end of the book.

NOTE ABOUT PUNCTUATION

Closely spaced *points de suspension* (...) indicate a brief pause, found frequently in passages drawn from talks by the Mother.

Widely spaced points (. . .) are elliptical, and indicate omission of a word or words from the passage.

“Learn to live within, to act always from within...”

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Letters on Yoga*, Cent. Ed., Vol. 23, p. 1012)

“...it is only by going inward behind the veil of superficial mind and living within, in an inner mind, an inner life, an inmost soul of our being that we can be fully self-aware....”

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Life Divine*, Cent. Ed., Vol. 19, p. 736)

“The individual being has to find himself, his true existence; he can only do this by going inward, by living within and from within....”

SRI AUROBINDO

(*The Life Divine*, Cent. Ed., Vol. 19, p. 1027)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	...	ix
1. GENERAL METHODS AND PRINCIPLES		
The One Way – Quiet, Calm, Peace	...	1
Becoming More Conscious	...	2
Observation versus Analysis	...	5
Using the Will	...	7
Rest and Relaxation	...	9
Sleep	...	11
Recuperating One's Energies	...	17
Detachment and Rejection	...	22
Equality	...	27
2. DISTURBANCES OF MIND		
Mental Noise	...	30
Obsessive and Compulsive Thoughts	...	32
Unruly and Perturbing Thoughts	...	35
Anxiety	...	44
3. DISTURBANCES OF THE VITAL		
Fear	...	50
Boredom and Lack of Energy	...	53
Depression	...	56
Anger	...	58
Haste and Agitation	...	61
Feelings of Inferiority	...	64
Sensitiveness	...	65
Jealousy	...	68
Transforming the Vital	...	69
4. DISTURBANCES OF THE BODY AND PHYSICAL CONSCIOUSNESS		
Rest, Quiet, Goodwill	...	86

Will, Discipline, Endurance	...	88
Preoccupation with Illness	...	91
Faith and Suggestion	...	94
Medicines	...	98
Healing the Nerves	...	101
5. DISTURBANCES OF THE SUBCONSCIENT		
How to Deal with the Subconscious	...	108
Subconscious Habits	...	110
Collective Subconscious Influences	...	111
6. THE PSYCHIC BEING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH		
The Psychic – Source of Inner Well-Being	...	119
7. EXERCISES FOR GROWTH AND MASTERY		
Stepping Back	...	123
Becoming Aware of “Oneself”	...	124
Self-Observation and Self-Organization	...	126
Visualization for Discovering One’s Being	...	131
Awakening the Inner Consciousness	...	134
Exercising Static Power	...	138
Becoming Aware of the Shadow	...	139
Mastery Through Attitude	...	143
Identification	...	144
Widening the Consciousness	...	150
Dynamic Meditation	...	155
Drawing upon Helpful Forces	...	156
Self-Recollection – Remembering	...	157
Using Life as a Mirror	...	158
Establishing Peace in the Mind	...	161
Glossary	...	165
References	...	167
Index	...	172

INTRODUCTION

Our psychological state is normally characterized by continual disturbances of varying degrees of severity. Some of the common disturbances are fear, anxiety, depression, insecurity, restlessness, anger, jealousy, suspicion, etc. Up to a certain degree, such disturbances are considered "normal". When the disturbances experienced by an individual exceed what is regarded as normal, the person is said to be suffering from a lack of "mental health". When disturbances reach extreme proportions and significantly disable an individual, the person is deemed to be suffering from mental illness. Thus mental health is generally understood as absence of marked psychological disturbances.

An increasing number of people, however, find such a view of mental health unsatisfactory for two reasons. First, it is felt that mental health should consist in certain *positive* characteristics which impart a *positive* sense of psychological well-being, such as peace, inner security, confidence, a sense of mastery, etc.; the mere absence of significant disturbances does not constitute mental health. Secondly, people are beginning to realize that it is not only the more acute disturbances such as anxiety, depression, agitation, etc. that impair mental health; even such things as the constant chatter and distractibility of the mind, the perpetual hankering for different objects of desire, the recurrent pull of inertia, etc. – which few look upon as psychological disturbances – are felt by more and more people as states that mar inner well-being and therefore denote a lack of mental health.

To such people, yoga may have something valuable to

offer. For yoga is a psychological approach which aims at a radical change of consciousness so as to lead to a state of immutable and unconditioned peace, freedom and joy. The perfect yogic state has been described as not only free from all disturbances, but also immune to them by virtue of its positive characteristics.

Every system of psychological healing is based on a certain conception of the nature of the human being – what a human being is made up of, what is normal about human nature, and what constitutes an abnormality or a disturbance. Therefore, in order to apply any methods of psychological healing, it is necessary to understand the conception of human nature and about the psychological disturbances on which the methods are based. This introductory chapter aims at explaining the nature of the human being, of psychological disturbances and of mental health in the light of Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Without a good grasp of these explanations it would be difficult to follow much of what is contained in the rest of the book.

PARTS OF THE BEING

Our being is a complex amalgam of many different elements. We are vaguely conscious of only the more superficial ones. Apart from the body and its sensations, we are to some extent conscious of various psychological elements, such as thoughts, feelings, desires, impulses, etc., all of which are lumped together and generally referred to as the “mind”. However, from the viewpoint of Integral Yoga, our being is made up of various distinct parts. As Sri Aurobindo remarks:

“The ‘Mind’ in the ordinary use of the word covers indiscriminately the whole consciousness, for man is a mental being and mentalises everything...”¹

“Each plane of our being – mental, vital, physical – has its own consciousness, separate though interconnected and interacting, but to our outer mind and sense, in our waking experience, they are all confused together.”²

The three parts of the being referred to above – mental, vital, physical – constitute the outer being, each part having its own distinct nature and characteristics. Below is a brief description of each of these three parts in Sri Aurobindo’s words:

“... in the language of this yoga the words ‘mind’ and ‘mental’ are used to connote specially the part of the nature which has to do with cognition and intelligence, with ideas, with mental or thought perceptions, the reactions of thought to things, with the truly mental movements and formations, mental vision and will, etc., that are part of the intelligence. The vital has to be carefully distinguished from mind, even though it has a mind element transfused into it; the vital is the Life-nature made up of desires, sensations, feelings, passions, energies of action, will of desire, reactions of the desire-soul in man and of all that play of possessive and other related instincts, anger, fear, greed, lust, etc., that belong to this field of the nature. Mind and vital

1. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), p. 320.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 347.

are mixed up on the surface of the consciousness, but they are quite separate forces in themselves and as soon as one gets behind the ordinary surface consciousness one sees them as separate, discovers their distinction and can with the aid of this knowledge analyse their surface mixtures.”³

“The body... has its own consciousness and acts from it, even without any mental will of our own or even against that will, and our surface mind knows very little about this body-consciousness, feels it only in an imperfect way, sees only its results and has the greatest difficulty in finding out their causes.”⁴

“In many things, in matters of health and illness for instance, in all automatic functionings, the body acts on its own and is not a servant of the mind. If it is fatigued, it can offer a passive resistance to the mind’s will. It can cloud the mind with *tamas*, inertia, dullness, fumes of the subconscious so that the mind cannot act. The arm lifts, no doubt, when it gets the suggestion, but at first the legs do not obey when they are asked to walk; they have to learn how to leave the crawling attitude and movement and take up the erect and ambulatory habit. When you first ask the hand to draw a straight line or to play music, it can’t do it and won’t do it. It has to be schooled, trained, taught, and afterwards it does automatically what is required of it. All this proves that there is a body-consciousness which can do things at the mind’s order, but has to be awakened, trained, made a

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 320-321.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 347.

good and conscious instrument.”⁵

(It should be noted that the body-consciousness is only part of the whole physical consciousness; the latter permeates also the vital and the mental.)

SUBDIVISIONS OF PARTS OF THE BEING

Since the various parts of the being are interconnected, they interact on one another, resulting in distinguishable subdivisions within each part of the being. Thus, besides the mind proper, there is a part of the mind which is interfused with the vital, called the vital mind. There is also a part of the mind which is interfused with the physical, called the physical mind. Similar subdivisions exist within the vital and the physical. Three of these various subdivisions are particularly relevant to the subject-matter of this compilation, and are described below. These three subdivisions are: the physical mind, the vital mind and the vital physical.

The physical mind is the aspect of the mind which partakes of the characteristics of the physical consciousness. Some of the chief characteristics of the physical, namely, inertia, the tendency to act mechanically like an automaton, repetitiveness, constriction and chaotic activity are reflected in the physical mind in the form of mental torpor, doubt, obscurity, confusion, mechanical reactions to things and habitual modes of thinking. The part of the physical mind which is closest to the physical is referred to as the mechanical mind; it acts like a machine that goes on

5. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), pp. 323-324.

turning round and round whatever thoughts occur in it.

The vital mind is influenced by vital forces and movements, and therefore cannot think freely and independently of such influences as the thinking mind can do. The function of the vital mind is not to think or reason, but to dream and imagine, whether it is about success or failure, enjoyment or suffering, good fortune or ill fortune.

The vital physical refers to the part of the physical that is intermixed with the vital. It is this part that is involved in the reactions of the nerves and the reflexive sensations and feelings. It is also the agent of pain.

From the viewpoint of Integral Yoga, each part of the outer being has certain *inherent* psychological disturbances. The following sections delineate the disturbances associated with each of the different parts mentioned above.

DISTURBANCES ASSOCIATED WITH THE MIND

From one viewpoint, the root cause of all psychological disturbances lies in the nature of the mind. The peculiar characteristic of mental consciousness is that it is self-reflective, that is, it can objectivise itself. One part of the mind can separate itself and watch the rest as an object. The part that stands back serves as a mirror which reflects to the mind its own state. This objectivising nature of the mind accounts for the very awareness of psychological disturbances. Secondly, the agony of any disturbance is magnified by several other factors related to the mind, such as memory, anticipation, imagination and the mind's inherent need – in the face of its essential incapacity – to

understand and find a solution to the problems causing the disturbances.

Whereas simple awareness through objectivisation belongs to the mind proper, the fearful imaginations and anticipations, resulting in anxiety, come from the part of the mind intermixed with the vital, called the vital mind.

Another manifestation of the vital mind in relation to psychological disturbances is to be seen in the so-called "defense mechanisms" associated with all psychiatric disorders. A defense mechanism is defined as a means of warding off a painful feeling, such as anxiety, guilt, etc., from the level of awareness. One of the chief defense mechanisms is that of rationalization, by which the mind colludes with the vital in providing specious explanations and justifications for impulses and desires of the vital. As Sri Aurobindo states:

"The vital started in its evolution with obedience to impulse and no reason – as for strategy, the only strategy it understands is some tactics by which it can compass its desires. It does not like the voice of knowledge and wisdom – but curiously enough by the necessity which has grown up in man of justifying action by reason, the *vital mind* has developed a strategy of its own which is to get the reason to find out reasons for justifying its own feelings and impulses."⁶

Another example of a defense mechanism is that of projection, by which we tend to attribute a feeling or motive to another person who, in fact, does not have that feeling or motive. Such a phenomenon is due to the fact

6. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 24), p. 1329.

that the cognitive functions of perception and judgment are, in most human beings, strongly influenced by the feelings and impulses of the vital. As the Mother observes:

“The sense organs are under the influence of the psychological state of the individual because something comes in between the eye’s perception and the brain’s reception. It is very subtle; the brain receives the eye’s perceptions through the nerves; there is no reasoning, it is so to say instantaneous, but there is a short passage between the eye’s perception and the cell which is to respond and evaluate it in the brain. And it is this evaluation of the brain which is under the influence of feelings. It is the small vibration between what the eye sees and what the brain estimates which often falsifies the response. And it is not a question of good faith, for even the most sincere persons do not know what is happening, even very calm people, without any violent emotion, who do not even feel an emotion, are influenced in this way without being aware of the intervention of this little falsifying vibration.

“It is only when you have conquered all attraction and all repulsion that you can have a correct judgment. As long as there are things that attract you and things that repel you, it is not possible for you to have an absolutely sure functioning of the senses.”⁷

What is called a projection in psychopathology is simply an exaggeration of the everyday distortion of our perceptions and judgments by the vital mind alluded to in the

7 *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 4), p. 11.

above-quoted passage.

Less obvious forms of disturbances attributable to the mind are related to the part of the mind that is intermixed with the physical consciousness, called the physical mind. The mechanical and chaotic activity of physical consciousness, mentioned previously, is reflected in the ceaseless and incoherent thought activity which turns the mind into a veritable market-place where thoughts constantly come and go in a disorderly manner.

Related to the chaotic nature of the physical mind are its features of unsteadiness and susceptibility to the influence of the physical things which determine to a large extent the way most people think. Referring to this susceptibility to the external determinants of ordinary thinking, the Mother remarks:

“One believes he has his own way of thinking. Not at all. It depends totally upon the people one speaks with or the books he has read or on the mood he is in. It depends also on whether you have a good or bad digestion, it depends on whether you are shut up in a room without proper ventilation or whether you are in the open air; it depends on whether you have a beautiful landscape before you; it depends on whether there is sunshine or rain! You are not aware of it, but you think all kinds of things, completely different according to a heap of things which have nothing to do with you!”⁸

Most people, who are not aware of the chaotic activity of the physical mind and its unsteadiness, do not experi-

8. *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 6), pp. 258-259.

ence these characteristics of the mind as disturbances. It is only when one takes up a discipline for quieting or controlling the mind that one realises the presence of these deeply-rooted disturbances.

Another characteristic of the physical consciousness which influences the mind is its mechanical repetitiveness. This trait is manifested in the automatic recurrences of thoughts and words to which the physical mind is prone. Again, most people are either not aware or not disturbed by such repetitive thoughts unless the thoughts are of an upsetting nature, such as hostile, guilt-laden or lewd thoughts, and become of an obsessive nature so that one is unable to stop them.

Still another psychological disturbance related to the physical mind stems from the obscurity of the physical consciousness, leading to perpetual doubt. Here too, though the disturbance is inherent in the very nature of the physical mind, one usually becomes aware of it only when the disturbance is pronounced and manifests in compulsive behaviour, such as the compulsion to check and re-check if a door has been locked or if the gas has been turned off.

One form of doubt that plagues the physical mind is indecision in the face of several desires pulling from different directions. When such an indecision takes an extreme form, paralyzing the action, it is recognized as a pathological symptom, referred to as *ebulia*. However, in its milder form, indecision is a normal characteristic in all those who have a somewhat active physical mind. Regarding the dynamics of indecision, Sri Aurobindo observes: "Those who can't choose, have the vital indecision and it is usually due to a too active physical mind, seeing too

many things or too many sides at a time.”⁹

From what has been stated above regarding the disturbances of the physical mind, it should be apparent that the obsessive-compulsive neurosis – characterized by obsessive thoughts, compulsive behaviour, indecision, etc. – is related chiefly to the physical mind.

DISTURBANCES ASSOCIATED WITH THE VITAL

The vital, like the mind, has certain inherent disturbances of its own. Being the seat and source of desires and longings, the vital constitutes one of the chief psychological disturbances, though extremely few people are conscious enough to experience desire as a disturbance. The fact that desire constitutes a disturbance or suffering is well brought out in the following remarks made by the Mother in response to the question: Where does desire come from?

“The Buddha said that it comes from ignorance. It is more or less that. It is something in the being which fancies that it needs something else in order to be satisfied. And the proof that it is ignorance is that when one has satisfied it, one no longer cares for it, at least ninety-nine and a half times out of a hundred. I believe, right at its origin it is an obscure need for growth, as in the lowest forms of life love is changed into the need to swallow, absorb, become joined with another thing. This is the most primitive form of love in the lowest forms of life, it is to take and absorb. Well, the need to

9. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 24), p. 1326.

take is desire. So perhaps if we went back far enough into the last depths of the inconscience, we could say that the origin of desire is love. It is love in its obscurest and most unconscious form. It is a need to become joined with something, an attraction, a need to take, you see.

"Take for instance... you see something which is – which seems to you or is – very beautiful, very harmonious, very pleasant; if you have the true consciousness, you experience this joy of seeing, of being in a conscious contact with something very beautiful, very harmonious, and then that's all. It stops there. You have the joy of it – that such a thing exists, you see. And this is quite common among artists who have a sense of beauty. For example, an artist may see a beautiful creature and have the joy of observing the beauty, grace, harmony of movement and all that, and that's all. It stops there. He is perfectly happy, perfectly satisfied, because he has seen something beautiful. An ordinary consciousness, altogether ordinary, dull like all ordinary consciousness – as soon as it sees something beautiful, whether it be an object or a person, hop! 'I want it!' It is deplorable, you know. And into the bargain it doesn't even have the joy of the beauty, because it has the anguish of desire. It misses that and has nothing in exchange, because there is nothing pleasant in desiring anything. It only puts you in an unpleasant state, that's all."¹⁰

The chief point to be noted in the above-quoted passage is that the "anguish of desire" constitutes an inherent

10. *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 7), pp. 37-38.

disturbance of the vital. As long as the vital consciousness prevails, one is in "an unpleasant state" of desiring, and it is impossible to have inner peace.

Besides desire, the vital is the spring of a host of other disturbing feelings. One of the chief vital disturbances is fear. As a rule, human beings are constantly subject to fear, though very few are aware of the continual undercurrent of fear. As the Mother observes:

"The normal human condition is a state filled with apprehensions and fears; if you observe your mind deeply for ten minutes, you will find that for nine out of ten it is full of fears – it carries in it fear about many things, big and small, near and far, seen and unseen, and though you do not usually take conscious notice of it, it is there all the same."¹¹

It is not surprising, therefore, that anxiety, which is simply "fear spread thin", is the commonest of all psychiatric symptoms.

Closely related to fear are two other major disturbances of the vital, namely, anger and depression. The Mother says the following about these two feelings:

"...one is almost constantly in an ordinary vital state where the least unpleasant thing very spontaneously and easily brings you depression – depression if you are a weak person, revolt if you are a strong one. Every desire which is not satisfied, every impulse which meets an obstacle, every unpleasant contact with outside things, very easily and very spontaneously creates de-

11. *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 3), p. 57.

pression or revolt, for that is the normal state of things.”¹²

Whereas depression is experienced by everyone as an unpleasant or disturbed state, not many realise that the antipode of depression, namely, anger (referred to as revolt in the above-quoted passage), equally constitutes a disturbance. One has only to consider the psychosomatic effects of anger to realise this fact.

Besides desire, depression, and anger spoken of above, there are many other manifestations of the vital which lead to a psychological disturbance. One such manifestation, which deserves mention because of its wide prevalence in our times, is impatience. Since a desire, unless checked by the mental will or by another counteracting desire, has an innate drive to satisfy itself immediately, impatience may be said to be an essential characteristic of the vital. And the stronger the desire, the greater the impatience. It is this tendency of the vital which is at the basis of the “time urgency” of present-day civilization, and which has been identified as one of the chief traits that characterize what Freidman and Rosenman have labeled Type A behaviour, regarded by these noted researchers in the field of cardiology as the chief factor in coronary artery and heart disease and high blood pressure. (In extract no. 89 [pp. 62–63] of this compilation, the Mother alludes to this “hurry sickness” with a prophetic hint regarding its consequences as reflected in the high present-day incidence of strokes and heart attacks.)

It is not only the unpleasant feelings such as those discussed above that cause a disturbance. The excitement

12. *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 8), p. 192.

produced by pleasant feelings also leads to a definite psychophysiological disturbance. An interesting corroboration of this fact is provided by two medical researchers, Holmes and Rahe, who have developed the Life Change Index – an inventory that gives statistical values to various common life-events with regard to the degree of stress each type of event produces in an average person. The inventory includes not only such unhappy incidents as the death of a spouse, being fired from a job, etc., but also happy events such as marriage, outstanding personal achievements, etc. It is interesting that the inventory gives a higher stress-production value to a vacation and to Christmas than to being convicted of minor violations of the law! Holmes and Rahe attribute the stress caused by various life-events to the adaptation that a person is called upon to make in response to the changes produced by an event. However, the underlying factor which disturbs the homeostatic equilibrium is undeniably emotional, and pertains to the vital.

These findings in the field of medical research corroborate the view of Integral Yoga that suffering is inherent in the very nature of the untransformed vital, and consequently even what is experienced as a pleasant excitation of the vital leads to disturbances.

The fact that repression of the vital leads to disturbances is well-recognized both in psychiatry and yoga, and therefore need not be elaborated here. What is not recognized in psychiatry is that the free expression of the vital, too, produces disturbances. Even though most psychiatrists would recommend moderation in the satisfaction of desires, such a recommendation is based upon common-sense and physiological considerations rather than on psychiatric principles. For psychiatry knows of no specific

psychological disturbances resulting from an excessive satisfaction of desires. And as for the normal expression of desires, this is deemed not only perfectly all right but indispensable for maintaining psychological health.

Yoga, on the other hand, looks upon desiring *per se* as a disturbance. The metapsychology of such a view is expressed in the following words of the Mother:

“To have needs is to assert a weakness; to claim something proves that we lack what we claim. To desire is to be impotent; it is to recognise our limitations and confess our incapacity to overcome them.”¹³

As for the free play of desires, yoga holds that “this brings on fairly serious disorders.”¹⁴

The essential morbidity of the untransformed vital nature is particularly evident in its masochistic tendency to continue clinging to a disturbance and to wallow in it. Sri Aurobindo refers to this trait in the following extract from a letter:

“... a habit of the human vital – the tendency to keep any touch of grief, anger, vexation, etc. or any kind of emotional, vital or mental disturbance, to make much of it, to prolong it, not to wish to let it go, to return to it even when the cause of disturbance is past and could be forgotten, always to remember and bring it up when it can. This is a common trait of the human nature and a quite customary movement.”¹⁵

13. *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 1), p. 354.

14. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, pp. 178-179.

15. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 24), pp. 1357-58.

DISTURBANCES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PHYSICAL

The most prominent characteristic of physical consciousness is inertia or Tamas. Therefore an individual with a predominantly physical consciousness is slow in reacting to stimulation. It needs a violent stimulus to produce an emotional reaction in tamasic individuals. As the Mother remarks about such persons:

“... they always need new excitements, dramas, murders, suicides, etc. to get the impression of something. . . . And there is nothing, nothing that makes one more wicked and cruel than tamas. For it is this need of excitement which shakes you up a little, makes you come out of yourself.”¹⁶

Because of the inertia of physical consciousness, what is experienced as a pleasant intensity of a stimulus by the average person is too feeble or dull for the individual whose consciousness is chiefly that of the physical. In order to feel a pleasant stimulation, such a tamasic individual needs a violent stimulus, such that an average person would experience as unpleasant or even painful. Such a condition represents a psychological disturbance because it is a form of masochism – a state in which an individual finds pleasurable something that is experienced by most people as painful. Thus some forms of masochistic disorders are related to the physical consciousness.

An aspect of inertia is passivity, which manifests as a weakness of the will. Sri Aurobindo speaks of this as follows:

16. *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 5), p. 415.

"It [the weakness of the will] is a first result of coming down into the physical consciousness or of the physical consciousness coming up prominently. . . . The physical consciousness is full of inertia – it wants not to move but to be moved by whatever forces and that is its habit."¹⁷

"The physical consciousness or at least the more external parts of it are, as I have told you, in their nature inert – obeying whatever force they are habituated to obey, but not acting on their own initiative. When there is a strong influence of the physical inertia or when one is down in this part of the consciousness the mind feels like the material Nature that action of will is impossible."¹⁸

Weakness of the will may be regarded by some as pertaining to the province of ethics and morality rather than that of psychopathology. However, we must recognize that weakness of the will is a disturbance of volition and as such it is as relevant to psychopathology as disorders of the other two major psychological functions, namely, thinking and feeling.

What have been called habit disorders in psychiatry are also partly related to the physical consciousness, for the force of habit is derived from the inertia and mechanical repetitiveness of physical consciousness. As Sri Aurobindo explains:

"In the physical being the power of past impressions

17. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 24), p. 1439.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 1441-42.

is very great, because it is by the process of repeated impressions that consciousness was made to manifest in matter – and also by the habitual reactions of consciousness to these impressions, what the psychologists, I suppose, would call behaviour.”¹⁹

“The physical is the slave of certain forces which create a habit and drive it through the mechanical power of the habit. So long as the mind gives consent, you do not notice the slavery; but if the mind withdraws its consent, then you feel the servitude, you feel a force pushing you in spite of the mind’s will. It is very obstinate and repeats itself till the habit, the inner habit revealing itself in the outward act, is broken. It is like a machine which once set in motion repeats the same movement.”²⁰

As stated previously, the part of the physical that is intermixed with the vital, called the vital-physical, governs reactions of the nerves. As the nerves are involved in all psychological disturbances and most physiological ones as well, Sri Aurobindo observes: “It [the vital-physical] is also largely responsible for most of the suffering and disease of mind or body to which the physical being is subject in Nature.”²¹

THE SUBCONSCIENT AND ITS DISTURBANCES

Not mentioned so far is the subconscious – part of the being which, from the evolutionary point of view, pre-

19. *Ibid.*, p. 1441. 20. *Ibid.*, p. 1442.

21. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), p. 348.

cedes and is more primitive than the physical consciousness. It includes those concealed parts of the mental, the vital and the physical which have no waking consciousness in them. Everything that enters our consciousness sinks into the subconscious. Besides, all that is suppressed from conscious awareness without being eradicated is also pushed into the subconscious. The following extracts from Sri Aurobindo's letters elaborate upon what has just been stated about the nature of the subconscious and mention some of the chief disturbances associated with this part of the being.

"That part of us which we can strictly call subconscious because it is below the level of mind and conscious life, inferior and obscure, covers the purely physical and vital elements of our constitution of bodily being, unmentalised, unobserved by the mind, uncontrolled by it in their action. It can be held to include the dumb occult consciousness, dynamic but not sensed by us, which operates in the cells and nerves and all the corporeal stuff and adjusts their life process and automatic responses. It covers also those lowest functionings of submerged sense-mind which are more operative in the animal and in plant life."²²

". . . all that is consciously experienced sinks down into the subconscious, not as precise though submerged memories but as obscure yet obstinate impressions of experience, and these can come up at any time as dreams, as mechanical repetitions of past thought, feelings, action, etc., as 'complexes' exploding into action
22. *The Life Divine* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 19), pp. 733-34.

and event, etc., etc. The subconscious is the main cause why all things repeat themselves and nothing ever gets changed except in appearance. It is the cause why people say character cannot be changed, the cause also of the constant return of things one hoped to have got rid of for ever. All seeds are there and all Sanskaras of the mind, vital and body, . . . All too that is suppressed without being wholly got rid of sinks down there and remains as seed ready to surge up or sprout up at any moment."²³

"It is a known psychological law that whatever is suppressed in the conscious mind remains in the subconscious being and recurs either in the waking state when the control is removed or else in sleep. Mental control by itself cannot eradicate anything entirely out of the being. The subconscious in the ordinary man includes the larger part of the vital being and the physical mind and also the secret body-consciousness."²⁴

"The habit of strong recurrence of the same things in our physical consciousness, so that it is difficult to get rid of its habits, is largely due to a subconscious support. The subconscious is full of irrational habits."²⁵

"... we mean by the subconscious that quite submerged part of our being in which there is no wakenly conscious and coherent thought, will or feeling or organized reaction, but which yet receives obscurely the impressions of all things and stores them up in itself and

23. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), pp. 354-355.

24. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 23), p. 898.

25. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), p. 356.

and from it too all sorts of stimuli, of persistent habitual movements, crudely repeated or disguised in strange forms can surge up into dream or into the waking nature. For if these impressions rise up most in dream in an incoherent and disorganized manner, they can also and do rise up into our waking consciousness as a mechanical repetition of old thoughts, old mental, vital and physical habits or an obscure stimulus to sensations, actions, emotions which do not originate in or from our conscious thought or will and are even often opposed to its perceptions, choice or dictates. In the subconscious there is an obscure mind full of obstinate Sanskaras, impressions, associations, fixed notions, habitual reactions formed by our past, an obscure vital full of the seeds of habitual desires, sensations and nervous reactions, a most obscure material which governs much that has to do with the condition of the body. It is largely responsible for our illnesses; chronic or repeated illnesses are indeed mainly due to the subconscious and its obstinate memory and habit of repetition of whatever has impressed itself upon the body-consciousness."²⁶

More concealed disturbances which are related to the subconscious are the prenatal influences of the parents on the infant. The state of consciousness of the parents at the time of conception is regarded in yoga psychology as a powerful factor that underlies the physical, intellectual and characterological defects and deficiencies which a child may manifest. In response to a question whether the

26. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), p. 353.

wickedness found in some children is due to the fact that the parents did not wish to have the children, the Mother makes certain emphatic and categorical statements regarding the subconscious influence of the parents on the new-born. She says:

“It is perhaps a subconscious wickedness in the parents. It is said that people throw out their wickedness from themselves by giving it birth in their children. One has always a shadow in oneself. There are people who project this outside – that does not always free them from it, but still perhaps it comforts them! But it is the child who ‘profits’ by it, don’t you see? It is quite evident that the state of consciousness in which the parents are at that moment [of conception] is of capital importance. If they have very low and vulgar ideas, the children will reflect them quite certainly. And all these children who are ill-formed, ill-bred, incomplete (specially from the point of view of intelligence: with holes, things missing), children who are only half-conscious and half-formed – this is always due to the fault of the state of consciousness in which the parents were when they conceived the child. Even as the state of consciousness of the last moments of life is of capital importance for the future of the one who is departing, so too the state of consciousness in which the parents are at the moment of conception gives a sort of stamp to the child, which it will reflect throughout its life. So, these are apparently such little things – the mood of the moment, the moment’s aspiration or degradation, anything whatsoever, everything that takes place at a particular moment – it seems to be so small a thing, and it

has so great a consequence: it brings into the world a child who is incomplete or wicked or finally a failure. And people are not aware of that.

“Later, when the child behaves nastily, they scold it. But they should begin by scolding themselves, telling themselves: ‘In what a horrible state of consciousness must I have been when I brought that child into the world’. For it is truly that.”²⁷

MENTAL HEALTH AND INTEGRAL YOGA

It should be clear from the foregoing description of various psychological disturbances that, from the viewpoint of Integral Yoga, psychological health consists in emerging into a state of consciousness which is free from the disturbing influences of physical, vital, mental and subconscient parts of our being. It implies discovering and being in contact with a part of our being other than the physical, the vital and the mental. Integral Yoga speaks of several such parts of the being which are either behind or above the outer being of mind, vital and body. What looms large in the practice of Integral Yoga is the part of the being referred to as the psychic being. As the term “psychic” is commonly used with different meanings, we quote below Sri Aurobindo’s explanations of the term as used in Integral Yoga.

“The word psychic is used in English to indicate anything that is other or deeper than the external mind, life and body or it indicates sometimes anything occult

27. *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed. Vol. 5), pp. 412-413.

or supraphysical; but that is a use which brings confusion and error and we have almost entirely to discard it.”²⁸

“What is meant in the terminology of the yoga by the psychic is the soul element in the nature, the pure psyche or divine nucleus which stands behind mind, life and body (it is not the ego) but of which we are only dimly aware. It is a portion of the Divine and permanent from life to life, taking the experience of life through its outer instruments. As this experience grows it manifests a developing psychic personality which insisting always on the good, true and beautiful, finally becomes ready and strong enough to turn the nature towards the Divine. It can then come entirely forward, breaking through the mental, vital and physical screen, govern the instincts and transform the nature. Nature no longer imposes itself on the soul, but the soul, the Purusha, imposes its dictates on the nature”.²⁹

“The word soul is very vaguely used in English – as it often refers to the whole non-physical consciousness including even the vital with all its desires and passions. That was why the word psychic being has to be used so as to distinguish this divine portion from the instrumental parts of the nature.”³⁰

“The soul is a spark of the Divine Spirit which supports the individual nature; mind, life, body are the

28. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), p. 292.

29. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 24), p. 1605.

30. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), p. 290.

instruments for the manifestation of the nature. In most men the soul is hidden and covered over by the action of the external nature; they mistake the vital being for the soul, because it is the vital which animates and moves the body. But this vital being is a thing made up of desires and executive forces, good and bad; it is the desire-soul, not the true thing. It is when the true soul (psyche) comes forward and begins first to influence and then govern the actions of the instrumental nature that man begins to overcome vital desire and grow towards a divine nature."³¹

As stated above, the psyche is covered over by the outer nature of mind, life and body. However, the psyche exercises a constant, though indirect, influence on the outer being. There are brief moments or relatively enduring periods in the lives of most of us when we are more strongly under the influence of the psyche. During such moments or periods, we feel a certain state of inner well-being which we may experience differently at different times, as a state of peace, faith, joy, strength, love, aspiration, or simply goodwill towards all. The hallmark of such a state of psychological well-being which results from contact with one's psyche, as distinguished from an ordinary state of "feeling good", is that the psychic state of well-being is not dependent on outer conditions, such as favourable circumstances, good health, etc. On the contrary, a state of psychic well-being is often experienced in spite of unfavourable outer conditions.

Such a state of psychological health has been described by the Mother in speaking about the initial state of people

31. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

when they come to live in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. She says:

“Some of them come with a mental aspiration, either to serve or to learn; others come in the hope of doing yoga, of finding the Divine and uniting with Him; finally there are those who want to devote themselves entirely to the divine work upon earth. All of them come impelled by their psychic being, which wants to lead them towards self-realisation. They come with their psychic in front and ruling their consciousness; they have a psychic contact with people and things. Everything seems beautiful and good to them, their health improves, their consciousness grows more luminous; they feel happy, peaceful and safe; they think that they have reached their utmost possibility of consciousness. This peace and fullness and joy given by the psychic contact they naturally find everywhere, in everything and everybody. It gives an openness towards the true consciousness pervading here and working out everything. So long as the openness is there, the peace, the fullness and the joy remain with their immediate results of progress, health and fitness in the physical, quietness and goodwill in the vital, clear understanding and broadness in the mental and a general feeling of security and satisfaction.”³²

The above-quoted passage describes what, from the viewpoint of Integral Yoga, would be regarded as a state of “mental health”. Two things may be noted about such a state as described above. First, the state of psychological

32. *Collected Works of the Mother* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 12), p. 45.

well-being is described in terms of the physical ("health and fitness in the physical"), the vital ("quietness and goodwill in the vital") and the mental ("clear understanding and broadness in the mental"), as well as an over-all sense of inner well-being ("a general feeling of security and satisfaction"). Secondly, such a state of psychological health is ascribed to the fact that the psychic is in front and rules the consciousness, and gives one "a psychic contact with people and things".

The quintessence of mental health, from the viewpoint of Integral Yoga, lies in a change of consciousness, from one that is governed primarily by the outer consciousness of the physical, the vital or the mental to one that reflects more and more an inner or a higher consciousness. It is only by such a change of consciousness that one can be freed from psychological disturbances which, as elaborated in the preceding pages, are an inherent part of the ordinary physical, vital and mental consciousness in which we live most of the time. The kind of change of consciousness that is favoured most in Integral Yoga is that of "psychicisation", which lies in bringing the mind, the vital and the physical under the domination of the psychic. Such a change can be brought about gradually when the discovery of one's inmost being becomes more and more the dominating purpose of one's life. Before one discovers one's inmost being, one usually comes in contact with parts of the being which are intermediate between the outer being and the inmost being. Such a contact with these intermediate planes of the being, referred to in Integral Yoga as the subliminal or the inner parts of the being, does liberate one from the disturbances of the outer consciousness. However, it is only by psychicisation

that one can not only free oneself from the influence of the disturbances but also transform the outer consciousness so as to rid it altogether of all disturbances and establish an immutable state of positive mental health.

This book, compiled from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, aims at presenting some of the principles and methods of Integral Yoga for overcoming psychological disturbances and for attaining positive mental health. The reader who has been kept in view in selecting the extracts is someone who is open to ideas derived from yoga without necessarily being a practitioner of yoga. Therefore, generally, methods of yoga that would be pertinent only for a practitioner have not been included. However, some of the extracts do allude to methods which pertain to the practice of yoga.

As explained in the preceding pages, Sri Aurobindo's yoga distinguishes psychological disturbances according to the part or plane of the being to which they belong. Therefore, extracts in this compilation have been classified according to the different parts and planes of being as viewed in Sri Aurobindo's yoga.

Many methods and principles of Integral Yoga are of a general nature, being applicable to disturbances of any part of the being. Such general methods and principles have been placed in a separate section at the beginning of the book. This section also includes methods and principles for attaining positive well-being, as distinguished from merely overcoming disturbances. The last section, too, entitled "Exercises for Growth and Mastery", deals with methods for the attainment of positive psychological health.

A. S. Dalal

GENERAL METHODS AND PRINCIPLES

The One Way – Quiet, Calm, Peace

The way in which the pains went shows you how to deal with the whole nature, – for it is the same with the mental and vital as with the physical causes of ill-ease and disturbance. To remain quiet within, to hold on to the faith and experience that to be quiet and open and let the Force work is the one way.¹

*

Peace and stillness are the great remedy for disease. When we can bring peace in our cells, we are cured.²

*

The imperative condition for cure is calm and quietness. Any agitation, any nervousness prolongs the illness.³

*

Catch hold of a peace deep within and push it into the cells of the body. With the peace will come back the health.⁴

*

Peace in the nerves: indispensable for good health.⁵

*

To keep quiet and to concentrate, leaving the Force from above to do its work, is the surest way to be cured of anything and everything. There is no illness that can resist that if it is done properly, in time and long enough, with a steady faith and a strong will.⁶

*

Establish a greater peace and quietness in your body, that will give you the strength to resist attacks of illness.⁷

*

The peace and spontaneous knowledge are in the psychic being and from there they spread to mind and vital and physical. It is in the outer physical consciousness that the difficulty still tries to persist and brings the restlessness sometimes into the physical mind, sometimes into the nerves, sometimes in the shape of bodily trouble into the body. But all these things can and must go. Even the illnesses can go entirely with the growth of peace and power in the nerves and physical cells – stomach pains, weakness of the eyes and everything else.⁸

Becoming More Conscious

In the ordinary life people accept the vital movements, anger, desire, greed, sex, etc. as natural, allowable and legitimate things, part of the human nature. Only so far as society discourages them or insists to keep them within fixed limits or subject to a decent restraint or measure,

people try to control them so as to conform to the social standard of morality or rule of conduct. Here, on the contrary, as in all spiritual life, the conquest and complete mastery of these things is demanded. That is why the struggle is more felt, not because these things rise more strongly in sadhaks than in ordinary men, but because of the intensity of the struggle between the spiritual mind which demands control and the vital movements which rebel and want to continue in the new as they did in the old life. As for the idea that the sadhana raises up things of the kind, the only truth in that is this that, first, there are many things in the ordinary man of which he is not conscious, because the vital hides them from the mind and gratifies them without the mind realising what is the force that is moving the action – thus things that are done under the plea of altruism, philanthropy, service, etc. are largely moved by ego which hides itself behind these justifications; in yoga the secret motive has to be pulled out from behind the veil, exposed and got rid of. Secondly, some things are suppressed in the ordinary life and remain lying in the nature, suppressed but not eliminated; they may rise up any day or they may express themselves in various nervous forms or other disorders of the mind or vital or body without it being evident what is their real cause. This has been recently discovered by European psychologists and much emphasised, even exaggerated in a new science called psycho-analysis. Here again, in sadhana one has to become conscious of these suppressed impulses and eliminate them – this may be called rising up, but that does not mean that they have to be raised up into action but only raised up before the consciousness so as to be cleared out of the being.⁹

To work for your perfection, the first step is to become conscious of yourself, of the different parts of your being and their respective activities. You must learn to distinguish these different parts one from another, so that you may become clearly aware of the origin of the movements that occur in you, the many impulses, reactions and conflicting wills that drive you to action. It is an assiduous study which demands much perseverance and sincerity. For man's nature, especially his mental nature, has a spontaneous tendency to give a favourable explanation for everything he thinks, feels, says and does. It is only by observing these movements with great care, by bringing them, as it were, before the tribunal of our highest ideal, with a sincere will to submit to its judgment, that we can hope to form in ourselves a discernment that never errs.¹⁰

*

*But one can become conscious, Sweet Mother,
can't one?*

Fully! But for this one must work a little within oneself. One must withdraw from the surface.

Almost totally, everybody lives on the surface, all the time, all the time on the surface. And for them it's even the only thing which exists – the surface. And when something compels them to draw back from the surface, some people feel that they are falling into a hole. There are people who, if they are drawn back from the surface, suddenly feel that they are crumbling down into an abyss, so unconscious they are!

They are conscious only of a kind of small thin crust

which is all that they know of themselves and things and the world, and it is so thin a crust! Many! I have experienced, I don't know how often... I tried to interiorise some people and immediately they felt that they were falling into an abyss, and at times a black abyss. Now this is the absolute inconscience. But a fall, a fall into something which for them is like a non-existence, this happens very often. People are told: "Sit down and try to be silent, to be very quiet"; this frightens them terribly.

A fairly long preparation is needed in order to feel an increase of life when one goes out of the outer consciousness. It is already a great progress. And then there is the culmination, that when one is obliged for some reason or other to return to the outer consciousness, it is there that one has the impression of falling into a black hole, at least into a kind of dull, lifeless greyness, a chaotic mixture of disorganised things, with the faintest light, and all this seems so dull, so dim, so dead that one wonders how it is possible to remain in this state – but this of course is the other end – unreal, false, confused, lifeless!¹¹

Observation versus Analysis

What the Mother spoke of was not self-analysis nor dissection; they are mental things which can deal with the inanimate or make the live dead – they are not spiritual methods. What the Mother spoke of was not analysis, but a seeing of oneself and of all the living movements of the being and the nature, a vivid observation of the personalities and forces that move on the stage of our being, their motives, their impulses, their potentialities, an observa-

tion quite as interesting as the seeing and understanding of a drama or a novel, a living vision and perception of how things are done in us, which brings also a living mastery over this inner universe. Such things become dry only when one deals with them with analytic and ratiocinative mind, not when one deals with them thus seemingly and intuitively as a movement of life. If you had that observation (from the inner spiritual, not the outer intellectual and ethical viewpoint), then it would be comparatively easy for you to get out of your difficulties . . . Of course, all that can be done to the best effect when you stand back from the play of your nature and become the Witness-Control or the Spectator-Actor-Manager. But that is what happens when you take this kind of self-seeing posture.¹²

*

Your practice of psychoanalysis was a mistake. . . . The psycho-analysis of Freud is the last thing that one should associate with yoga. It takes up a certain part, the darkest, the most perilous, the unhealthiest part of the nature, the lower vital subconscious layer, isolates some of its most morbid phenomena and attributes to it and them an action out of all proportion to its true role in the nature. Modern psychology is an infant science, at once rash and fumbling and crude. As in all infant sciences, the universal habit of the human mind – to take a partial or local truth, generalise it unduly and try to explain a whole field of Nature in its narrow terms – runs riot here. . . .

It is true that the subliminal in man is the largest part of his nature and has in it the secret of the unseen dynamisms which explain his surface activities. But the lower vital

subconscious which is all that this psycho-analysis of Freud seems to know, – and even of that it knows only a few ill-lit corners, – is no more than a restricted and very inferior portion of the subliminal whole. . . . First, one should make the higher mind and vital strong and firm and full of light and peace from above; afterwards one can open up or even dive into the subconscious with more safety and some chance of a rapid and successful change.¹³

Using the Will

Peace is not a necessary precondition for the action of the will. When the being is troubled, it is often the business of the will to impose quiet on it.¹⁴

*

The will is a part of the consciousness and ought to be in human beings the chief agent in controlling the activities of the nature.¹⁵

*

It is not the right kind of will-power then, probably they use some fighting or effortful will-power instead of the quiet but strong will that calls down the higher consciousness and force.¹⁶

*

If there is a constant use of the will the rest of the being

learns however slowly to obey the will and the actions become in conformity with the will and not with the vital impulses and desire. As for the rest (the feelings and desires etc. themselves) if they are not indulged in action or imagination and not supported by the will, if they are merely looked at and rejected when they come, then after some struggle they begin to lose their force and dwindle away.¹⁷

*

For transformation to be genuine, the difficulty has to be rejected by all the parts. The Force can only help or enable them to do it, but it cannot replace this necessary action by a summary process. Your mind and inner being must impart their will to the whole.¹⁸

*

So long as there is not a constant action of the Force from above or else of a deeper will from within, the mental will is necessary.¹⁹

*

To be conscious is the first step towards overcoming – but for the overcoming strength is necessary and also detachment and the will to overcome.²⁰

Rest and Relaxation

The real rest is in the inner life founded in peace and silence and absence of desire. There is no other rest – for without that the machine goes on whether one is interested in it or not. The inner *mukti* is the only remedy.²¹

*

I knew people of great intelligence, admirable artists who, as soon as they began to “relax”, became utterly foolish! They did the most vulgar things, behaved like ill-bred children – they were relaxing. Everything comes from this “need” of relaxation; and what does that mean for most men? It means, always, coming down to a lower level. They do not know that for a true relaxation one must rise one degree higher, one must rise above oneself. If one goes down, it adds to one’s fatigue and brings a stupefaction. Besides, each time one comes down, one increases the load of the subconscious – this huge subconscious load which one must clean and clean if one wants to mount, and which is like fetters on the feet. But it is difficult to teach that, for one must know it oneself before one can teach it to others.

This is never told to children, they are allowed to commit all the stupidities in the world under the pretext that they need relaxation.

It is not by sinking below oneself that one removes fatigue. One must climb the ladder and there one has true rest, because one has the inner peace, the light, the universal energy. And little by little one puts oneself in

touch with the truth which is the very reason of one's existence.

If you contact that definitively, it removes completely all fatigue.²²

*

The rest must not be one which goes down into the inconscience and *tamas*. The rest must be an ascent into the Light, into perfect Peace, total Silence, a rest which rises up out of the darkness. Then it is true rest, a rest which is an ascent.²³

*

How many times in life does one meet people who become pacifists because they are afraid to fight, who long for rest before they have earned it, who are satisfied with a little progress and in their imagination and desires make it into a marvellous realisation so as to justify their stopping half-way.

In ordinary life, already, this happens so much. Indeed, this is the bourgeois ideal, which has deadened mankind and made man into what he is now: "Work while you are young, accumulate wealth, honour, position; be provident, have a little foresight, put something by, lay up a capital, become an official – so that later when you are forty you "can sit down", enjoy your income and later your pension and, as they say, enjoy a well-earned rest." – To sit down, to stop on the way, not to move forward, to go to sleep, to go downhill towards the grave before one's time, cease to live the purpose of life – to sit down!

The minute one stops going forward, one falls back. The moment one is satisfied and no longer aspires, one begins to die. Life is movement, it is effort, it is a march forward, the scaling of a mountain, the climb towards new revelations, towards future realisations. Nothing is more dangerous than wanting to rest. It is in action, in effort, in the march forward that repose must be found, the true repose of complete trust in the divine Grace, of the absence of desires, of victory over egoism.

True repose comes from the widening, the universalisation of the consciousness. Become as vast as the world and you will always be at rest. In the thick of action, in the very midst of the battle, the effort, you will know the repose of infinity and eternity.²⁴

Sleep

It is not possible to do at once what you like with the body. If the body is told to sleep only 2 or 3 hours, it may follow if the will is strong enough – but afterwards it may get exceedingly strained and even break down for want of needed rest. The yogis who minimise their sleep succeed only after a long tapasya in which they learn how to control the forces of Nature governing the body.²⁵

*

It must be the want of sleep that keeps your nervous system exposed to weakness – it is a great mistake not to take sufficient sleep. Seven hours is the minimum needed. When one has a very strong nervous system one can

reduce it to six, sometimes even five – but it is rare and ought not to be attempted without necessity.²⁶

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Both for fevers and for mental trouble sleep is a great help and its absence very undesirable – it is the loss of a curative agency.²⁷

*

Sleep can be a very active means of concentration and inner knowledge. Sleep is the school one has to go through, if one knows how to learn his lesson there, so that the inner being may be independent of the physical form, conscious in itself and master of its own life. There are entire parts of the being which need this immobility and semi-consciousness of the outer being, of the body, in order to be able to live their own life, independently.

Only, people don't know, they sleep because they sleep, as they eat, as they live – by a kind of instinct, a semi-conscious impulse. They don't even ask themselves the question. You are asking the question now: Why does one sleep? But there are millions and millions of beings who sleep without ever having asked themselves the question why one sleeps. They sleep because they feel sleepy, they eat because they are hungry, and they do foolish things because their instincts push them, without thinking, without reasoning; but for those who know, sleep is a school, an excellent school for something other than the school of waking hours.

It is another school for another purpose, but it is a

school. One wants to make the maximum progress possible, one must know how to use one's nights as one uses one's days; only, usually, people don't at all know what to do, and they try to remain awake and all that they create is a physical and vital imbalance – and sometimes a mental one also – as a result.

The physical and all material physical parts should be absolutely at rest, but a repose which is not a fall into the inconscient – this is one of the conditions. And the vital must be in a repose of silence. Then if you have these three things at rest the inner being which is rarely in relation with the outer life, because the outer life is too noisy and too unconscious for it to be able to manifest itself, can become aware of itself and awaken, become active and act upon the lower parts, establish a conscious contact. This is the real reason for sleep, apart from the necessity that, in the present conditions of life, activity and rest, rest and activity must alternate.

The body needs rest but there are very few people, as I said, who know how to sleep. They sleep in such conditions that they don't wake up refreshed or are hardly rested at all. But this is an entire science to learn.²⁸

*

In any case one thing you can do in all security is, before going to sleep, to concentrate, relax all tension in the physical being, try... that is, in the body try so that the body lies like a soft rag on the bed, that it is no longer something with twitchings and cramps; to relax it completely as though it were a kind of thing like a rag. And then, the vital: to calm it, calm it as much as you can,

make it as quiet, as peaceful as possible. And then the mind also – the mind, try to keep it like that, without any activity. You must put upon the brain the force of great peace, great quietude, of silence if possible, and not follow ideas actively, not make any effort, nothing, nothing; you must relax all movement there too, but relax it in a kind of silence and quietude as great as possible.

Once you have done all this, you may add either a prayer or an aspiration in accordance with your nature, to ask for the consciousness and peace and to be protected against all the adverse forces throughout the sleep, to be in a concentration of quiet aspiration and in the protection; ask the Grace to watch over your sleep; and then go to sleep. This is to sleep in the best possible conditions. What happens afterwards depends on your inner impulses, but if you do this persistently, night after night, night after night, after some time it will have its effect.

Usually, you see, one lies down on the bed and tries to sleep as quickly as possible, and then, that's all, with a state of total ignorance of how it ought to be done. But what I have just told you, if you do that regularly it will have an effect. In any case, it can very well avoid the attacks which occur at night: one has gone to bed very nicely, one wakes up ill; this is something absolutely disastrous, it means that during the night one has been getting infected somewhere in a state of total inconscience.²⁹

*

. . . certainly if you want to sleep quietly at night, you must not study till just before sleeping. If you read something which requires concentration, your head will con-

tinue to work and so you won't sleep well. When the mind continues working one doesn't rest.

The ideal, you see, is to enter an integral repose, that is, immobility in the body, perfect peace in the vital, absolute silence in the mind – and the consciousness goes out of all activity to enter into *Sachchidananda*. If you can do this, then when you wake up you get up with the feeling of an extraordinary power, a perfect joy. But it is not very, very easy to do this. It can be done; this is the ideal condition.

Usually it is not at all like this, and most of the time almost all the hours of sleep are wasted in some kind of disordered activities; your body begins to toss about in your bed, you give kicks, you turn, you start, you turn this way and that, and then you do this (*gesture*) and then this... So you don't rest at all.³⁰

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To sleep well one must learn how to sleep.

If one is physically very tired, it is better not to go to sleep immediately, otherwise one falls into the unconscious. If one is very tired, one must stretch out on the bed, relax, loosen all the nerves one after another until one becomes like a rumpled cloth in one's bed, as though one had neither bones nor muscles. When one has done that, the same thing must be done in the mind. Relax, do not concentrate on any idea or try to solve a problem or ruminate on impressions, sensations or emotions you had during the day. All that must be allowed to drop off quietly: one gives oneself up, one is indeed like a rag. When you have succeeded in doing this, there is always a little flame, there – that flame never goes out and you

become conscious of it when you have managed this relaxation. And all of a sudden this little flame rises slowly into an aspiration for the divine life, the truth, the consciousness of the Divine, the union with the inner being, it goes higher and higher, it rises, rises, like that, very gently. Then everything gathers there, and if at that moment you fall asleep, you have the best sleep you could possibly have. I guarantee that if you do this carefully, you are sure to sleep, and also sure that instead of falling into a dark hole you will sleep in light, and when you get up in the morning you will be fresh, fit, content, happy and full of energy for the day.³¹

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This [remembering one's dreams] is not so necessary. It is useful if one wants to have a great control over his sleep. But this also one must know how to do. To remember one's dreams – that's in the morning . . . In the morning when you get up, you must not be in a hurry. That is, you must not wake up just at the moment when you must get out of bed; you must have some time in hand and must take good care, must make a formation before going to sleep, and take good care when waking up not to make any abrupt movement, because if you make an abrupt movement, automatically the memory of your dreams vanishes. You must remain with the head absolutely motionless on the pillow, without stirring, until you can quietly recall to yourself the consciousness which went out, and recall it as one pulls at something, very gently, without any knocking and without haste, in a state of attention and concentration. And then, as the conscious-

ness comes back to you, the consciousness that went out, if you remain quite motionless, very quiet, and do not begin once again to think of all kinds of things, it will bring back first an impression and then the memory, sometimes a fragmentary memory. But if you remain in that same state of receptive immobility, then it can become more and more a conscious memory. But for this you must have time. If there is the least feeling that you have to hurry, it is finished, you can do nothing at all. You must not even ask yourself, when waking up, "What is the time?" It is absolutely finished. If you do that, everything vanishes.³²

Recuperating One's Energies

It [reserve of energy] depends on the capacity to receive the universal vital force; because in fact, through food also it is these vital forces one receives but one receives them from below. But in order to have reserves you must know how to receive the universal vital forces constantly and to have a kind of balance in the being which prevents you from spending more than you have.

A proportion has to be kept between the receptivity and the expenditure. It is a kind of harmony in the being which must be established. Only, some people have an almost instinctive power of attracting towards them the vital forces or absorbing them – the universal vital forces, I mean – and so they make up their expense as they go along spending. These people can produce much more than others. Some of them, in certain conditions like sleep or a kind of repose or relaxation, can accumulate forces and later they exhaust them, so to say, in their activities

and they must yet once again charge the battery afterwards – this is already a much less favourable condition.

Some people don't know how to receive the forces at all. These live on the energies concentrated in the body – for there is some concentrated energy in all the cells of the body. They live upon that, but after some time, they are drained out completely if they don't know how to recuperate; when they have spent all the energies which were concentrated inside them either they fall ill or they never recuperate them. So this cannot last very long; it lasts the average lifetime of human beings, and yet, at the end of a certain number of years they are no longer able to make the same effort or to produce as much, or above all to make any progress.

But those who know instinctively or who have learnt to receive and accumulate the universal vital forces, these can last almost indefinitely. The wear and tear is very little, especially if they know how to do it and do it with knowledge and method: then here it can reach a certain degree of perfection.

When one knows, sometimes just two or three minutes are sufficient to recuperate the energies spent over a long period. Only, one must know how to do it.

But those who draw back upon themselves, who turn and double up on themselves, cannot do this. One must live all the time in a very vast and very expansive consciousness (I don't know if you understand the word, it means something which extends very homogeneously and quietly, as when the tide is at its height and the water spreads like that, quietly – that's the impression). The vital must be like that – then one is open to the universal forces. But if, for example, one has the very bad habit of

exchanging vital forces with one's fellowmen, then one loses the capacity altogether. So unless one is in relation with someone, one receives nothing at all. But naturally if you receive forces through others, you receive at the same time all the difficulties of the other person, perhaps sometimes his qualities also, but these are less contagious. This indeed is something that shuts you up most.

Some people... unless they have more or less social relations with others, relations of friendship, conversing... and then it goes still farther... they don't receive any forces; and this is how they receive them. But this always makes a soup. The forces one receives are already half digested, in any case they don't have their primal purity, and this affects your own capacity.

But when one has this capacity in his own consciousness – for example, you go for a walk and come to a place which is somewhat vast, like the seashore or like a great plain or the summit of a mountain, a place where the horizon is fairly vast, then if you have this kind of physical instinct which suddenly makes you as vast as the horizon, you have a sense of infinity, immensity; and the vaster you become, the quieter and more peaceful you become.

It is enough for you to have a contact with Nature like that.

There are many other means, but this one is very spontaneous. There is also... when you see something very beautiful you can have the same thing: a kind of inner joy and an opening to the forces, and so this widens you and fills you at the same time. There are many means but usually one does not use them. Naturally, if you enter into contemplation and aspire for a higher life and call down the forces from above, this recuperates your

energies more than anything else. But there are numerous methods.³³

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First of all, you must know that it [universal vital force] exists and that one can enter into contact with it. Secondly, you must try to make this contact, to feel it circulating everywhere, through everything, in all persons and all circumstances; to have this experience, for example, when you are in the countryside among trees, to see it circulating in the whole of Nature, in trees and things, and then commune with it, feel yourself close to it, and each time you want to deal with it, recall that impression you had and try to enter into contact.

Some people discover that with certain movements, certain gestures, certain activities, they enter into contact more closely. I knew people who gesticulated while walking... this truly gave them the impression that they were in contact – certain gestures they made while walking... But children do this spontaneously: when they give themselves completely in their games, running, playing, jumping, shouting; when they spend all their energies like that, they give themselves entirely, and in the joy of playing and moving and running they put themselves in contact with this universal vital force; they don't know it, but they spend their vital force in a contact with the universal vital force and that is why they can run without really feeling very tired, except after a very long time. That is, they spend so much that if they were not in contact with the universal force, they would be absolutely exhausted, immediately. And that is why, besides, they grow up; it is

also because they receive more than they spend; they know how to receive more than they spend. And this does not correspond to any knowledge. It is a natural, spontaneous movement. It is the movement... a movement of joy in what they are doing – of joyful expenditure. One can do many things with that.

I knew young people who had always lived in cities – in a city and in those little rooms one has in the big cities in which everyone is huddled. Now, they had come to spend their holidays in the countryside, in the south of France, and there the sun is hot, naturally not as here but all the same it is very hot (when we compare the sun of the Mediterranean coasts with that of Paris, for example, it truly makes a difference), and so, when they walked around the countryside the first few days they really began to get a terrible headache and to feel absolutely uneasy because of the sun; but they suddenly thought: "Why, if we make friends with the sun it won't harm us any more!" And they began to make a kind of inner effort of friendship and trust in the sun, and when they were out in the sun, instead of trying to bend double and tell themselves, "Oh! how hot it is, how it burns!", they said, "Oh, how full of force and joy and love the sun is!" etc., they opened themselves like this (*gesture*), and not only did they not suffer any longer but they felt so strong afterwards that they went round telling everyone who said "It is hot" – telling them "Do as we do, you will see how good it is." And they could remain for hours in the full sun, bare-headed and without feeling any discomfort. It is the same principle.

It is the same principle. They linked themselves to the universal vital force which is in the sun and received this

force which took away all that was unpleasant to them.

When one is in the countryside, when one walks under the trees and feels so close to Nature, to the trees, the sky, all the leaves, all the branches, all the herbs, when one feels a great friendship with these things and breathes that air which is so good, perfumed with all the plants, then one opens oneself, and by opening oneself communes with the universal forces. And for all things it is like that.³⁴

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The energy must be spent to be renewed. The human body is not a closed jar that gets emptied by spending. The human body is a channel that receives only when it spends.³⁵

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Men are constantly spending the vital energy and need to renew it; one way to do it is by pulling from others in a vital interchange. This however is not necessary if one knows how to draw from the universal Nature or from the Divine, i.e. from above. Moreover when the psychic is active – there is always more lost than gained by the vital interchange.³⁶

Detachment and Rejection

The main difficulty seems to be that you are too subject to an excitement of the nerves – it is only by bringing quietude and calm into the whole being that a steady

progress in the sadhana can be assured.

The first thing to be done in order to recover is to stop yielding to the attack of the nerves – the more you yield and identify yourself with these ideas and feelings, the more they increase. You have to draw back and find back something in you that is not affected by pains and depressions, then from there you can get rid of the pains and depressions.³⁷

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Detachment means that one stands back from them [the imperfections and weaknesses of the nature], does not identify oneself with them or get upset or troubled because they are there, but rather looks on them as something foreign to one's true consciousness and true self, [and] rejects them . . . The firm will of rejection must be there, the pressure to get rid of them, but not any wrestling or struggle.³⁸

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These things rise because either they are there in the conscious part of the being as habits of the nature or they are there lying concealed and able to rise at any moment or they are suggestions from the general or universal Nature outside to which the personal being makes a response. In any case they rise in order that they may be met and cast out and finally rejected so that they may trouble the nature no longer. The amount of trouble they give depends on the way they are met. The first principle is to detach oneself from them, not to identify, not to

admit them any longer as part of one's real nature but to look on them as things imposed to which one says "This is not I or mine – this is a thing I reject altogether". One begins to feel a part of the being inside which is not identified, which remains firm and says "This may give trouble on the surface, but it shall not touch me". If this separate being within can be felt, then half the trouble is over – provided there is a will there not only to separate but to get rid of the imperfection from the surface nature also.³⁹

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Detachment is the beginning of mastery, but for complete mastery there should be no reactions at all. When there is something within undisturbed by the reactions that means the inner being is free and master of itself, but it is not yet master of the whole nature. When it is master, it allows no wrong reactions – if any come they are at once repelled and shaken off, and finally none come at all.⁴⁰

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... the constant recurrence of depression and despair or of doubt and revolt is due to a mental or vital formation which takes hold of the vital mind and makes it run round always in the same circle at the slightest provoking cause or even without cause. It is like an illness to which the body consents from habit and from belief in the illness even though it suffers from it, and once started the illness runs its habitual course unless it is cut short by some strong counteracting force. If once the body can withdraw

its consent, the illness immediately or quickly ceases, – that was the secret of the Coué system. So too, if the vital mind withdraws its consent, refuses to be dominated by the habitual suggestions and the habitual movements, these recurrences of depression and despair can be made soon to cease. But it is not easy for this mind, once it has got into the habit of consent, even a quite passive and suffering and reluctant consent, to cancel the habit and get rid of the black circle. It can be done easily only when the mind refuses any longer to believe in the suggestions or accept the ideas or feelings that start the circle.⁴¹

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It is these things you have to get rid of. But a sorrowful or despondent mood is not the proper condition for doing that. You have to stand back from the feeling of suffering, anguish and apprehension, reject it and look quietly at the resistance, applying always to yourself your will to change and insisting that it shall be done and cannot fail to be done now or later with the divine help because the divine help is there. It is then that the strength can come to you that will overcome the difficulties.⁴²

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As to the change of nature, the first step is to become conscious and separate from the old surface nature. For, this rajasic vital nature is a surface creation of Prakriti, it is not the true being; however persistent it seems, it is only a temporary combination of vital movements. Behind is the true mental and vital being supported by the psychic.

The true being is calm, wide, peaceful. By drawing back and becoming separate one creates the possibility of living in the peace of this inner Purusha and no longer identified with the surface Prakriti. Afterwards it will be much easier to change by the force of the psychic perception and the Peace and Power and Light from above the surface being.⁴³

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Ordinarily, identification leads to ignorance rather than knowledge, for the consciousness is lost in what it becomes and is unable to envisage proper causes, concomitants and consequences. Thus you identify yourself with a movement of anger and your whole being becomes one angry vibration, blind and precipitate, oblivious of everything else. It is only when you stand back, remain detached in the midst of the passionate turmoil that you are able to see the process with a knowing eye.⁴⁴

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What is the witness soul?

It is the soul entering into a state in which it observes without acting. A witness is one who looks at what is done, but does not act himself. So when the soul is in a state in which it does not participate in the action, does not act through Nature, simply draws back and observes, it becomes the witness soul. . . .

When one wants to detach oneself from something, from a certain movement or activity or state of conscious-

ness, this is the most effective method; one steps back a little, watches the thing like that, as one would watch a scene in a play, and one doesn't intervene. And a moment later, the thing doesn't concern you any longer, it is something which takes place outside you. Then you become very calm.⁴⁵

Equality

Equality is to remain unmoved within in all conditions.⁴⁶

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Equality is not the same thing as forbearance, – though undoubtedly a settled equality immensely extends, even illimitably, a man's power of endurance and forbearance.

Equality means a quiet and unmoved mind and vital, it means not to be touched or disturbed by things that happen or things said or done to you, but to look at them with a straight look, free from the distortions created by personal feeling, and to try to understand what is behind them, why they happen, what is to be learnt from them, what is it in oneself which they are cast against and what inner profit or progress one can make out of them; it means self-mastery over the vital movements, – anger and sensitiveness and pride as well as desire and the rest, – not to let them get hold of the emotional being and disturb the inner peace, not to speak and act in the rush and impulsion of these things, always to act and speak out of a calm inner poise of the spirit. It is not easy to have this equality in any full perfect measure, but one should always try

more and more to make it the basis of one's inner state and outer movements.⁴⁷

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Whatever the unpleasantness of circumstances, however disagreeable the conduct of others, you must learn to receive them with a perfect calm and without any disturbing reaction. These things are the test of equality. It is easy to be calm and equal when things go well and people and circumstances are pleasant; it is when they are the opposite that the completeness of the calm, peace, equality can be tested, reinforced, made perfect.⁴⁸

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. . . it is necessary to keep equality under pain and suffering – and that means to endure firmly and calmly, not to be restless or troubled or depressed or despondent, to go on with a steady faith in the Divine Will. But equality does not include inert acceptance. If, for instance, there is temporary failure of some endeavour in the sadhana, one has to keep equality, not to be troubled or despondent, but one has not to accept the failure as an indication of the Divine Will and give up the endeavour. You ought rather to find out the reason and meaning of the failure and go forward in faith towards victory. So with illness – you have not to be troubled, shaken or restless, but you have not to accept illness as the Divine Will, but rather look upon it as an imperfection of the body to be got rid of as you try to get rid of vital imperfections or mental errors.⁴⁹

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A wise impersonality, a quiescent equality, a universality which sees all things as the manifestations of the Divine, the one Existence, is not angry, troubled, impatient with the way of things or on the other hand excited, over-eager and precipitate, but sees that the law must be obeyed and the pace of time respected, observes and understands with sympathy the actuality of things and beings, but looks also behind the present appearance to their inner significances and forward to the unrolling of their divine possibilities . . .⁵⁰

DISTURBANCES OF MIND

Mental Noise

For the buzz of the physical mind, reject it quietly, without getting disturbed, till it feels discouraged and retires shaking its head and saying, "This fellow is too calm and strong for me." There are always two things that can rise up and assail the silence, – vital suggestions, the physical mind's mechanical recurrences. Calm rejection for both is the cure. There is a Purusha within who can dictate to the nature what it shall admit or exclude, but its will is a strong, quiet will; if one gets perturbed or agitated over the difficulties, then the will of the Purusha cannot act effectively as it would otherwise.⁵¹

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What you have now seen and describe in your letter is the ordinary activity of the physical mind which is full of ordinary habitual and constantly recurrent thoughts and is always busy with external objects and activities. What used to trouble you before was the vital mind which is different, – for that is always occupied with emotions, passions, desires, reactions of all kinds to the contacts of life and the behaviour of others. The physical mind also can be responsive with these things but in a different way – its nature is less that of desire than of habitual activity, small common interests, pains and pleasures. If one tries to control or suppress it, it becomes more active.

To deal with this mind two things are necessary, (1) not so much to try to control or fight with or suppress it as to stand back from it: one looks at it and sees what it is but refuses to follow its thoughts or run about among the objects it pursues, remaining at the back of the mind quiet and separate; (2) to practise quietude and concentration in this separateness, until the habit of quiet takes hold of the physical mind and replaces the habit of these small activities. This of course takes time and can only come by practice.⁵²

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To be able to detach oneself from the action of the mechanical mind is the first necessity; it is easier then for the quiet and peace of mind to remain undisturbed by this action even if it occurs.⁵³

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It was rather that the active mind became more quiet so that the movements of the mechanical mind became more evident – that is what often happens. What has to be done in that case is to detach oneself from these movements and concentrate without further attention to them. They are then likely to sink into quietude or fall away.⁵⁴

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The mind must learn to be silent – remain calm, attentive, without making a noise. If you try to silence your mind directly, it is a hard job, almost impossible; for the most

material part of the mind never stops its activity – it goes on and on like a non-stop recording machine. It repeats all that it records and unless there is a switch to stop it, it continues and continues indefinitely. If, on the other hand, you manage to shift your consciousness into a higher domain, above the ordinary mind, this opening to the Light calms the mind, it does not stir any longer, and the mental silence so obtained can become constant. Once you enter into this domain, you may very well never come out of it – the external mind always remains calm.

The only true solution is aspiration for the higher light.⁵⁵

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The more the psychic spreads in the outer being, the more all these things [the mechanical activities of the subconscious mind] fall quiet. That is the best way. Direct efforts to still the mind are a difficult method.⁵⁶

Obsessive and Compulsive Thoughts

Thoughts are real entities which usually last until they are realised. Some people are obsessed by their own thoughts. They think of something and the thought returns and goes round and round in their heads as if it were something from outside. But it is their own formations returning again and again and striking the mind that has formed them. That is one aspect of the matter.

Did you ever have the experience of a thought taking the form of words or a sentence in your mind and return-

ing over and over again? But if you are clever enough to take a piece of paper and a pencil and write it down – that is the end of it, it won't return any more, you have thrown it out of yourself. The thing has had its little satisfaction, it has manifested itself sufficiently and it won't return.

And there is something more interesting still: if you have a bad thought that annoys and disturbs you, write it down very attentively, very carefully, putting as much consciousness and will as you can. Then take the piece of paper and, with concentration, tear it up with the will that the thought will be torn up in the same way. That is how you will get rid of it.⁵⁷

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. . . the truth is that the physical mind is truly completely stupid! You can prove it very easily. It is constructed probably as a kind of control, and in order to make sure that things are done as they ought to be. I think that this is its normal work.... But it has made it a habit to doubt everything.

I think I have already told you about the small experiment I made one day. I removed my control and left the control to the physical mind – it is the physical mind which doubts. So I made the following experiment: I went into a room, then came out of the room and closed the door. I had decided to close the door; and when I came to another room, this mind, the material mind, the physical mind, you see, said, "Are you sure you have locked the door?" Now, I did not control, you know... I said, "Very well, I obey it!" I went back to see. I observed that the door was

closed. I came back. As soon as I couldn't see the door any longer, it told me, "Have you verified properly?" So I went back again.... And this went on till I decided: "Come now, that's enough, isn't it? Closed or not, I am not going back any more to see!" This could have gone on the whole day. It is made like that. It stops being like that only when a higher mind, the rational mind tells it, "Keep quiet!" Otherwise it goes on indefinitely.... So, if by ill-luck you are centred there, in this mind, even the things you know higher up as quite true, even things of which you have a physical proof – like that of the closed door, it doubts, it will doubt, because it is built of doubt.⁵⁸

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The mechanical mind is still more stupid than the physical mind. The physical mind is what we spoke about one day, that which is never sure of anything.

I told you the story of the closed door, you remember. Well, that is the nature of the physical mind. The mechanical mind is at a lower level still, because it doesn't even listen to the possibility of a convincing reason, and this happens to everyone. Usually we don't let it function, but it comes along repeating the same things, absolutely mechanically, without rhyme or reason, just like that. When some craze or other takes hold of it, it goes... For example, you see, if it fancies counting: "One, two, three, four", then it will go on: "One, two, three, four; one, two, three, four." And you may think of all kinds of things, but it goes on: "One, two, three, four", like that... (*Mother laughs*). Or it catches hold of three words, four words and repeats them and goes on repeating them; and unless

one turns away with a certain violence and punches it soundly, telling it, "Keep quiet!", it continues in this way, indefinitely.⁵⁹

Unruly and Perturbing Thoughts

To reject doubts means control of one's thoughts – very certainly so. But the control of one's thoughts is as necessary as the control of one's vital desires and passions or the control of the movements of one's body – for the yoga, and not for the yoga only. One cannot be a fully developed mental being even, if one has not a control of the thoughts, is not their observer, judge, master, – the mental Purusha, *manomaya puruṣa*, *sākṣī*, *anumantā*, *īśvara*. It is no more proper for the mental being to be the tennis-ball of unruly and uncontrollable thoughts than to be a rudderless ship in the storm of the desires and passions or a slave of either the inertia or the impulses of the body. I know it is more difficult because man being primarily a creature of mental Prakriti identifies himself with the movements of his mind and cannot at once dissociate himself and stand free from the swirl and eddies of the mind whirlpool. It is comparatively easy for him to put a control on his body, at least on a certain part of its movements; it is less easy but still very possible after a struggle to put a mental control on his vital impulses and desires; but to sit like the Tantric yogi on the river, above the whirlpool of his thoughts, is less facile. Nevertheless, it can be done; all developed mental men, those who get beyond the average, have in one way or other or at least at certain times and for certain purposes to separate the two

parts of the mind, the active part which is a factory of thoughts and the quiet masterful part which is at once a Witness and a Will, observing them, judging, rejecting, eliminating, accepting, ordering corrections and changes, the Master in the House of Mind, capable of self-empire, *sāmrājya*.⁶⁰

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Detach yourself from it [the habitual movement of thoughts] – make your mind external to it, something that you can observe as you observe things occurring in the street. So long as you do not do that it is difficult to be the mind's master.⁶¹

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Why do bad thoughts come?

Haven't I told you why bad thoughts come?... For as many reasons as there are bad thoughts! Each one comes for its own special reason: it may be through affinity, it may be just to tease you, it may be because you call them, it may be because you expose yourself to attacks, it may be all this at once and many more things besides.

Bad thoughts come because there is something corresponding somewhere within you; otherwise you might see something passing like that, but they would not come inside you. I suppose the question means: why do you suddenly think something bad?

Because the stages are very different. I have already explained to you that the mental atmosphere is worse than

any public place when a crowd is there: innumerable ideas, thoughts of all kinds and all forms criss-cross in such a complicated tangle that it is impossible to make out anything precise. Your head is in the midst of it, and your mind even more so; it bathes in it as one bathes in the sea. And all this comes and goes, passes, turns, collides, enters, goes out.... If you were conscious of the mental atmosphere in which you live, obviously it would be a little maddening! I think personal cerebral limits are quite necessary as a filter, for a very long time in life.

To be able to get out of all that and live fully in the mental atmosphere as it is, seeing it as it is – it is the same for the vital atmosphere, by the way; that is perhaps yet uglier! – to live in it and see it as it is, one must be strong, one must have a very steady sense of inner direction. But in any case, whether you see it or not, whether you feel it or not, it is a fact, it is like that. So one cannot ask where bad thoughts come from – they are everywhere. Why do they come? – where would they go? You are right in the midst of them!

What governs this filter of consciousness which makes you conscious of certain thoughts and not conscious of others, is your inner attitude, your inner affinities, your inner habits – I am speaking of the mind, not of the psychic – it is your education, your cerebral development, etc. That is a kind of filter formed by your ego, and certain thoughts pass through it and others don't – automatically. That is why the nature of the thoughts you receive may be quite an important indication for you of the kind of character you have – it may be quite subconscious for you, for a man is not in the habit of really knowing himself, but it is an indication of the general tendency of your charac-

ter. To put things in a very simplified way, if you take an optimist, for instance, well, in general, optimistic ideas will come to him; for a pessimist they will generally be pessimistic ideas – I am speaking very broadly – for a person with a rebellious nature, they will be rebellious ideas; and for a very sheepish person, they will be sheepish ideas! Granting that sheep have ideas! That is the usual normal condition.

Now, if it so happens that you have decided to progress and if you enter the path of yoga, then a new factor intervenes. As soon as you want to progress, you immediately meet the resistance of everything that does not want to progress both in you and around you. And this resistance naturally expresses itself in all the thoughts that correspond to it.

Suppose that you want to make a progress regarding attachment to food, for example; well, almost constantly there will come to you thoughts particularly interested in food, about what should be taken, what should not be taken, how it should be taken, how it should not be taken; and these ideas will come to you, they will seem quite natural to you. And the more you say within yourself, “Oh! how I would like to be free from all that, what a hindrance to my progress are all these preoccupations”, the more will they come, quietly, until the progress is truly made within and you have risen to a level of consciousness where you can see all these things from above and put them *in their place* – which is not a very big place in the universe. And so on, for all things. Therefore, your occupations and affinities are going to put you almost contradictorily into contact not only with ideas having an affinity and relation with your way of being, but with the

opposite. And if you don't take care from the beginning to keep an attitude of discernment, you will be turned into a mental battlefield.

If you know how to rise to a higher level, simply into a region of the speculative mind which is not quite the ordinary physical mind, you can see all this play and all this struggle, all this conflict, all these contradictions as a curiosity which does not touch or affect you. If you rise a step higher still and see the goal towards which you want to go, you will gradually come to discern between ideas favourable to your progress which you will keep, and ideas opposed to this progress which harm and impair it; and from above you will have the power to set them aside, calmly, without being otherwise affected by them. But if you remain there, at that level in the midst of that confusion and conflict, well, you risk getting a headache!

The best thing to do is to occupy yourself with something practical which will compel you to concentrate specially: studies, work or some physical occupation for the body which demands attention – anything at all that forces you to concentrate on what you are doing and no longer be a prey to these ramblings. But if you have the misfortune to remain there and look at them, then surely, as I said, you will get a headache. For it is a problem which must be resolved either by a descent into practical life and a concentration on some practical effort or else by rising above and looking from above at all this chaos so as to be able to bring some order into it and set it right.

But one must never remain on the same plane, it is a plane which is no good either for physical or moral health.⁶²

(Extracts 63 to 66 contain the Mother's comments on certain verses from the Dhammapada.)

*If a man speaks or acts with an evil mind,
suffering follows him as the wheel follows the
hoof of the bullock that pulls the cart.*

That is to say, ordinary human life, such as it is in the present world, is ruled by the mind; therefore the most important thing is to control one's mind; so we shall follow a graded or "conjugate" discipline, to use the Dhammapada's expression, in order to develop and control our minds.

There are four movements which are usually consecutive, but which in the end may be simultaneous: to observe one's thoughts is the first, to watch over one's thoughts is the second, to control one's thoughts is the third and to master one's thoughts is the fourth. To observe, to watch over, to control, to master. All that to get rid of an evil mind, for we are told that the man who acts or speaks with an evil mind is followed by suffering as closely as the wheel follows the hoof of a bullock that ploughs or draws the cart.⁶³

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Mind predominates. Everything proceeds from mind. In all things the primordial element is mind. If a man speaks or acts with a purified mind, happiness accompanies him as closely as his inseparable shadow.

This is the counterpart of what we read last time. The Dhammapada contrasts a purified mind with an evil mind. We have already said that there are four successive stages for the purification of the mind. A purified mind is naturally a mind that does not admit any wrong thought, and we have seen that the complete mastery of thought which is required to gain this result is the last achievement in the four stages I have spoken of. The first is: to observe one's mind.

Do not believe that it is such an easy thing, for to observe your thoughts, you must first of all separate yourself from them. In the ordinary state, the ordinary man does not distinguish himself from his thoughts. He does not even know that he thinks. He thinks by habit. And if he is asked all of a sudden, "What are you thinking of?", he knows nothing about it. That is to say, ninety-five times out of a hundred he will answer, "I do not know." There is a complete identification between the movement of thought and the consciousness of the being.

To observe the thought, the first movement then is to step back and look at it, to separate yourself from your thoughts so that the movement of the consciousness and that of thought may not be confused. Thus when we say that one must observe one's thoughts, do not believe that it is so simple; it is the first step. I suggest that this evening in our meditation we take up this first exercise which consists in standing back from one's thought and looking at it.⁶⁴

"He has insulted me, he has beaten me, he has humiliated me, he has robbed me." Those who nourish thoughts such as these never appease their hatred.

The Dhammapada tells us first of all that bad thoughts bring about suffering and good thoughts bring about happiness. Now it gives examples of what bad thoughts are and tells us how to avoid suffering. Here is the first example, I repeat: "He has insulted me, he has beaten me, he has humiliated me, he has robbed me"; and it adds: "Those who nourish thoughts such as these never appease their hatred."

We have begun our mental discipline, basing ourselves on the successive stages of mental development and we have seen that this discipline consists of four consecutive movements, which we have described in this way, as you surely remember: to observe, to watch over, to control and to master; and in the course of the last lesson we have learnt – I hope – to separate ourselves from our thoughts so as to be able to observe them as an attentive spectator.

Today we have to learn how to watch over these thoughts. First you look at them and then you watch over them. Learn to look at them as an enlightened judge so that you may distinguish between the good and the bad, between thoughts that are useful and those that are harmful, between constructive thoughts that lead to victory and defeatist thoughts which turn us away from it. It is this power of discernment that we must acquire now; that will be the subject of our meditation tonight.

As I have told you, the Dhammapada will give us examples, but examples are only examples. We must

ourselves learn how to distinguish thoughts that are good from those that are not, and for that you must observe, as I have said, like an enlightened judge – that is to say, as impartially as possible; it is one of the most indispensable conditions.⁶⁵

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“He has insulted me, he has beaten me, he has humiliated me, he has robbed me.” Those who do not nourish thoughts such as these foster no hatred.

This is the counterpart of what we read the other day. But note that this concerns only thoughts that generate resentment. It is because rancour, along with jealousy, is one of the most widespread causes of human misery.

But how to avoid having rancour? A large and generous heart is certainly the best means, but that is not within the reach of all. Controlling one's thought may be of more general use.

Thought-control is the third step of our mental discipline. Once the enlightened judge of our consciousness has distinguished between useful and harmful thoughts, the inner guard will come and allow to pass only approved thoughts, strictly refusing admission to all undesirable elements.

With a commanding gesture the guard will refuse entry to every bad thought and push it back as far as possible.

It is this movement of admission and refusal that we call thought-control and this will be the subject of our meditation tonight.⁶⁶

Anxiety

It is obvious that what especially characterises man is this mental capacity of watching himself live. The animal lives spontaneously, automatically, and if it watches itself live, it must be to a very minute and insignificant degree, and that is why it is peaceful and does not worry. Even if an animal is suffering because of an accident or an illness, this suffering is reduced to a minimum by the fact that it does not observe it, does not project it in its consciousness and into the future, does not imagine things about its illness or its accident.

With man there has begun this perpetual worrying about what is going to happen, and this worry is the principal, if not the sole cause of his torment. With this objectivising consciousness there has begun anxiety, painful imaginations, worry, torment, anticipation of future catastrophes, with the result that most men – and not the least conscious, the most conscious – live in perpetual torment. Man is too conscious to be indifferent, he is not conscious enough to know what will happen. Truly it could be said without fear of making a mistake that of all earth's creatures he is the most miserable. The human being is used to being like that because it is an atavistic state which he has inherited from his ancestors, but it is truly a miserable condition. And it is only with this spiritual capacity of rising to a higher level and replacing the animal's unconsciousness by a spiritual super-consciousness that there comes into the being not only the capacity to see the goal of existence and to foresee the culmination of the effort but also a clear-sighted trust in a higher spiritual power to which one can surrender one's whole being, entrust oneself, give the responsibility for

one's life and future and so abandon all worries.

Of course, it is impossible for man to fall back to the level of the animal and lose the consciousness he has acquired; therefore, for him there is only one means, one way to get out of this condition he is in, which I call a miserable one, and to emerge into a higher state where worry is replaced by a trusting surrender and the certitude of a luminous culmination – this way is to change the consciousness.

Truly speaking there is no condition more miserable than being responsible for an existence to which one doesn't have the key, that is, of which one doesn't have the threads that can guide and solve the problems. The animal sets itself no problems: it just lives. Its instinct drives it, it relies on a collective consciousness which has an innate knowledge and is higher than itself, but it is automatic, spontaneous, it has no need to will something and make an effort to bring it about, it is quite naturally like that, and as it is not responsible for its life, it does not worry. With man is born the sense of having to depend on himself, and as he does not have the necessary knowledge the result is a perpetual torment. This torment can come to an end only with a total surrender to a higher consciousness than his own to which he can totally entrust himself, hand over his worries and leave the care of guiding his life and organising everything.

How can a problem be solved when one doesn't have the necessary knowledge? And the unfortunate thing is that man believes that he has to resolve all the problems of his life, and he does not have the knowledge needed to do it. That is the source, the origin of all his troubles – that perpetual question, "What should I do?..." which is followed by another one still more acute, "What is going to

happen?" and at the same time, more or less, the inability to answer.

That is why all spiritual disciplines begin with the necessity of surrendering all responsibility and relying on a higher principle. Otherwise peace is impossible.

And yet, consciousness has been given to man so that he can progress, can discover what he doesn't know, develop into what he has not yet become; and so it may be said that there is a higher state than that of an immobile and static peace: it is a trust total enough for one to keep the will to progress, to preserve the effort for progress while ridding it of all anxiety, all care for results and consequences. This is one step ahead of the methods which may be called "quietist", which are founded on the rejection of all activity and a plunging into an immobility and inner silence, which forsake all life because it has been suddenly felt that without peace one can't have any inner realisation and, quite naturally, one thought that one couldn't have peace so long as one was living in outer conditions, in the state of anxiety in which problems are set and cannot be solved, for one does not have the knowledge to do so.

The next step is to face the problem, but with the calm and certitude of an absolute trust in the supreme Power which knows, and can make you act. And then, instead of abandoning action, one can act in a higher peace that is strong and dynamic.

This is what could be called a new aspect of the divine intervention in life, a new form of intervention of the divine forces in existence, a new aspect of spiritual realisation.⁶⁷

In the play of the cosmic forces, the will in the cosmos – as one might say – does not always work apparently in favour of a smooth and direct line for the work or the sadhana; it often brings in what seem to be upheavals, sudden turns which break or deflect the line, opposing or upsetting circumstances or perplexing departures from what had been temporarily settled or established. The one thing is to preserve equanimity and make an opportunity and means of progress out of all that happens in the course of the life and the sadhana. There is a higher secret Will transcendent behind the play and will of the cosmic forces – a play which is always a mixture of things favourable and things adverse – and it is that Will which one must wait upon and have faith in; but you must not expect to be able always to understand its workings. The mind wants this or that to be done, the line once taken to be maintained, but what the mind wants is not at all always what is intended in a larger purpose. One has to follow indeed a fixed central aim in the sadhana and not deviate from it, but not to build on outward circumstances, conditions, etc., as if they were fundamental things.⁶⁸

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To learn to be quiet and silent... When you have a problem to solve, instead of turning over in your head all the possibilities, all the consequences, all the possible things one should or should not do, if you remain quiet with an aspiration for goodwill, if possible a need for goodwill, the solution comes very quickly. And as you are silent you are able to hear it.

When you are caught in a difficulty, try this method:

instead of becoming agitated, turning over all the ideas and actively seeking solutions, of worrying, fretting, running here and there inside your head – I don't mean externally, for externally you probably have enough common sense not to do that! but inside, in your head – *remain quiet*. And according to your nature, with ardour or peace, with intensity or widening or with all these together, implore the Light and wait for it to come.⁶⁹

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Children when left to themselves and not deformed by older people have such a great trust that all will be well! For example, when they have a small accident, they never think that this is going to be something serious: they are spontaneously convinced that it will soon be over, and this helps so powerfully in putting an end to it.⁷⁰

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If the trust is there, spontaneous, candid, unquestioning, it works better than anything else, and the results are marvellous. It is with the contradictions and doubts of the mind that one spoils everything, with this kind of notion which comes when one is in difficulties: "Oh, it is impossible! I shall never manage it. And if it is going to be aggravated, if this condition I am in, which I don't want, is going to grow still worse, if I continue to slide down farther and farther, if, if, if, if..." like that, and one builds a wall between oneself and the force one wants to receive. The psychic being has this trust, has it wonderfully, without a shadow, without an argument, without a contradic-

tion. And when it is like that, there is not a prayer which does not get an answer, no aspiration which is not realised.⁷¹

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When one aspires for something, if at the same time one knows that the aspiration will be heard and answered in the best way possible, that establishes a quietude in the being, a quietude in its vibrations; whilst if there is a doubt, an uncertainty, if one does not know what will lead one to the goal or if ever one will reach it or whether there is a way of doing so, and so on, then one gets disturbed and that usually creates a sort of little whirlwind around the being, which prevents it from receiving the real thing. Instead, if one has a quiet faith, if whilst aspiring one knows that there is no aspiration (naturally, sincere aspiration) which remains unanswered, then one is quiet. One aspires with as much fervour as possible, but does not stand in nervous agitation asking oneself why one does not get immediately what one has asked for. One knows how to wait. I have said somewhere: "To know how to wait is to put time on one's side." That is quite true. For if one gets excited, one loses all one's time - one loses one's time, loses one's energy, loses one's movements. To be very quiet, calm, peaceful, with the faith that what is true will take place, and that if one lets it happen, it will happen so much the quicker. Then, in that peace everything goes much better.⁷²

DISTURBANCES OF THE VITAL

Fear

It is true that what one fears has the tendency to come until one is able to look it in the face and overcome one's shrinking.⁷³

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It is a mistake to think that by fearing or being unhappy you can progress. Fear is always a feeling to be rejected, because what you fear is just the thing that is likely to come to you: fear attracts the object of fear. Unhappiness weakens the strength and lays one more open to the causes of unhappiness.⁷⁴

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[Ways to remove fear:] By bringing down strength and calm into the lower vital (region below the navel). Also by will and imposing calm on the system when the fear arises. It can be done in either way or both together.⁷⁵

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When one feels frightened, what should one do?

That depends upon who you are. There are many ways of curing oneself of fear.

If you have some contact with your psychic being, you must call it immediately and in the psychic light put things back in order. This is the most powerful way.

When one does not have this psychic contact, but is still a reasonable being, that is, when one has a free movement of the reasoning mind, one can use it to reason with, to speak to oneself as one would to a child, explaining that this fear is a bad thing in itself and, even if there is a danger, to face the danger with fear is the greatest stupidity. If there is a real danger, it is only with the power of courage that you have a chance of coming out of it; if you have the least fear, you are done for. So with that kind of reasoning, manage to convince the part that fears that it must stop being afraid.

If you have faith and are consecrated to the Divine, there is a very simple way, it is to say: "Let Your will be done. Nothing can frighten me because it is You who are guiding my life. I belong to you and you are guiding my life." That acts immediately. Of all the means this is the most effective indeed, it is. That is, one must be truly consecrated to the Divine. If one has that, it acts immediately; all fear vanishes immediately like a dream. And the being with the bad influence also disappears like a dream along with the fear. You should see it running away at full speed, prrt! *Voilà*.

Now, there are people having a strong vital power in them and they are fighters who immediately lift up their heads and say: "Ah! an enemy is here, we are going to knock him down." But for that one must have the knowledge and a very great vital power. One must be vitally a giant. That does not happen to everyone.

So there are many different ways. They are all good, if

you know how to make use of the one that suits your own nature.⁷⁶

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Fear is a phenomenon of unconsciousness. It is a kind of anguish that comes from ignorance. One does not know the nature of a certain thing, does not know its effect or what will happen, does not know the consequences of one's acts, one does not know so many things; and this ignorance brings fear. One fears what one does not know. Take a child, if it is brought before someone it does not know (I am not speaking of a child with an awakened inner consciousness, I am speaking of an ordinary child), – you bring it before someone it does not know, its first movement will always be one of fear. Only very rare children – and they have another consciousness – are very bold. It may also be a mixture of apprehension, a kind of instinct. When one instinctively feels that something is dangerous and hasn't the means to remedy it, when one does not know what to do to protect himself from it, then he is afraid. There are, I believe, countless reasons for fear. But it is a movement of unconsciousness, in every case.

That which knows has no fear. That which is perfectly awake, which is fully conscious and which knows, has no fear. It is always something dark that is afraid.

One of the great remedies for conquering fear is to face boldly what one fears. You are put face to face with the danger you fear and you fear it no longer. The fear disappears. From the yogic point of view, the point of view of discipline, this is the cure recommended. In the

ancient initiations, especially in Egypt, in order to practise occultism, as I was telling you last time, it was necessary to abolish the fear of death completely. Well, one of the practices of those days was to lay the neophyte in a sarcophagus and leave him in there for a few days, as though he were dead. Naturally, he was not left to die, neither of hunger nor suffocation, but still he remained lying there as though he were dead. It seems that cures you of all fear.

When fear comes, if one succeeds in putting upon it consciousness, knowledge, force, light, one can cure it altogether.⁷

Boredom and Lack of Energy

There is nothing more contrary to the very reason of existence than this passing wave of boredom. If you make a little effort within yourself at that time, if you tell yourself: "Wait a bit, what is it that I should learn? What does all that bring to me so that I may learn something? What progress should I make in overcoming myself? What is the weakness that I must overcome? What is the inertia that I must conquer?" If you say that to yourself, you will see the next minute you are no longer bored. You will immediately get interested and you will make progress! This is a commonplace of consciousness.

And then, you know, most people when they get bored, instead of trying to rise a step higher, descend a step lower, they become still worse than what they were, and they do all the stupid things that others do, go in for all the vulgarities, all the meannesses, everything, in order to

amuse themselves. They get intoxicated, take poison, ruin their health, ruin their brain, they utter crudities. They do all that because they are bored. Well, if instead of going down, one had risen up, one would have profited by the circumstances. Instead of profiting, one falls a little lower yet than where one was. When people get a big blow in their life, some misfortune (what men call "misfortune", there are people who do have misfortunes), the first thing they try to do is to forget it – as though one did not forget quickly enough! And to forget, they do anything whatsoever. When there is something painful, they want to distract themselves – what they call distraction, that is, doing stupid things, that is to say, going down in their consciousness, going down a little instead of rising up.... Has something extremely painful happened to you, something very grievous? Do not become stupefied, do not seek forgetfulness, do not go down into the inconscience, you must go to the end and find the light that is behind, the truth, the force and the joy; and for that you must be strong and refuse to slide down.⁷⁸

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It is only effort, in whatever domain it be – material effort, moral effort, intellectual effort – which creates in the being certain vibrations which enable you to get connected with universal vibrations; and it is this which gives joy. It is effort which pulls you out of inertia; it is effort which makes you receptive to the universal forces. And the one thing above all which spontaneously gives joy, even to those who do not practise yoga, who have no spiritual aspiration, who lead quite an ordinary life, is the

exchange of forces with universal forces. People do not know this, they would not be able to tell you that it is due to this, but so it is.

There are people who are just like beautiful animals – all their movements are harmonious, their energies are spent harmoniously, their uncalculating efforts call in energies all the time and they are always happy; but sometimes they have no thoughts in their head, sometimes they have no feelings in their heart, they live an altogether animalish life. I have known people like that; beautiful animals. They were handsome, their gestures were harmonious, their forces quite balanced and they spent without reckoning and received without measure. They were in harmony with the material universal forces and they lived in joy. They could not perhaps have told you that they were happy – joy with them was so spontaneous that it was natural – and they would have been still less able to tell you why, for their intelligence was not very developed. I have known such people, who were capable of making the necessary effort (not a prudent and calculated effort but a spontaneous one) in no matter what field: material, vital, intellectual, etc., and in this effort there was always joy. For example, a man sits down to write a book, he makes an effort which sets vibrating something in his brain to attract ideas; well, suddenly, this man experiences joy. It is quite certain that, whatever you do, even the most material work like sweeping a room or cooking, if you make the necessary effort to do this work to the maximum of your ability, you will feel joy, even if what you do is against your nature. When you want to realise something, you make quite spontaneously the necessary effort; this concentrates your energies on the

thing to be realised and that gives a meaning to your life. This compels you to a sort of organisation of yourself, a sort of concentration of your energies, because it is this that you wish to do and not fifty other things which contradict it. And it is in this concentration, this intensity of the will, that lies the origin of joy. This gives you the power to receive energies in exchange for those you spend.⁷⁹

Depression

How can depression be controlled?

Oh! there's a very simple way. Depression occurs generally in the vital, and one is overpowered by depression only when one keeps the consciousness in the vital, when one remains there. The only thing to do is to get out of the vital and enter a deeper consciousness. Even the higher mind, the luminous, higher mind, the most lofty thoughts have the power to drive away depression. Even when one reaches just the highest domains of thought, usually the depression disappears. But in any case, if one seeks shelter in the psychic, then there is no longer any room for depression.

Depression may come from two causes: either from a want of vital satisfaction or from a considerable nervous fatigue in the body. Depression arising from physical fatigue is set right fairly easily: one has but to take rest. One goes to bed and sleeps until one feels well again, or else one rests, dreams, lies down. The want of vital satisfaction is pretty easily produced and usually one must

face it with one's reason, must ferret out the cause of the depression, what has brought about the lack of satisfaction in the vital; and then one looks at it straight in the face and asks oneself whether that indeed has anything to do with one's inner aspiration or whether it is simply quite an ordinary movement. Generally one discovers that it has nothing to do with the inner aspiration and one can quite easily overcome it and resume one's normal movement. If that does not suffice, then one must go deeper and deeper until one touches the psychic reality. Then one has only to put this psychic reality in contact with the movement of depression, and instantaneously it will vanish into thin air.⁸⁰

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To yield to depression when things go wrong is the worst way of meeting the difficulty. There must be some desire or demand within you, conscious or subconscious, that gets excited and revolts against its not being satisfied. The best way is to be conscious of it, face it calmly and steadily throw it out.

If the lower vital (not the mind only) could permanently make up its mind that all desire and demand are contrary to the Truth and no longer call for them, these things would lose very soon their force of return.⁸¹

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Remorse, repentance, is the natural movement of the vital mind when it sees it has done a mistake. It is certainly better than indifference. Its disadvantage is that it disturbs

the vital stuff and sometimes leads to depression or discouragement. For that reason what is usually recommended to the sadhak is a quiet recognition of the mistake with a sincere aspiration and will that it should not be repeated or at least that the habit of making such mistakes should soon be eliminated. At a higher stage of development when the inner calm is established, one simply observes the defects of the nature as defects of a machinery that one has to put right and calls down the Light and Force for its rectification. In the beginning, however, the movement of repentance even helps provided it does not bring discouragement or depression.⁸²

Anger

I think you have always had an idea that to give expression to an impulse or a movement is the best way or even the only way to get rid of it. But that is a mistaken idea. If you give expression to anger, you prolong or confirm the habit of the recurrence of anger; you do not diminish or get rid of the habit. The very first step towards weakening the power of anger in the nature and afterwards getting rid of it altogether is to refuse all expression to it in act or speech. Afterwards one can go on with more likelihood of success to throw it out from the thought and feeling also. And so with all other wrong movements.

All these movements come from outside, from the universal lower Nature, or are suggested or thrown upon you by adverse forces – adverse to your spiritual progress. Your method of taking them as your own is again a wrong method; for by doing that you increase their power to

recur and take hold of you. If you take them as your own, that gives them a kind of right to be there. If you feel them as *not* your own, then they have no right, and the will can develop more power to send them away. What you must always have and feel as yours is this will, the power to refuse assent, to refuse admission to a wrong movement. Or if it comes in, the power to send it away, without expressing it.⁸³

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It is really simply the recurrence of an old habit of the nature. Look at it and see how trifling is the occasion of the rising of this anger and its outburst – it becomes more and more causeless – and the absurdity of such movements itself. It would not really be difficult to get rid of it if, when it comes, you looked at it calmly – for it is perfectly possible to stand back in one part of the being, observing in a detached equanimity even while the anger rises on the surface – as if it were someone else in your being who had the anger. The difficulty is that you get alarmed and upset and that makes it easier for the thing to get hold of your mind which it should not do.⁸⁴

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It is indeed when the quietude comes down from above or comes out from the psychic that the vital becomes full of peace or of kindness and goodwill. It is therefore that the inner psychic quietude first and afterwards the peace from above must occupy the whole being. Otherwise such things as anger in the vital can be controlled but it is

difficult to get rid of them altogether without this occupation by the inner quietude and higher peace.⁸⁵

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That is the right thing that must happen always when anger or anything else rises. The psychic reply must become habitual pointing out that anger is neither right nor helpful and then the being must draw back from these outward things and take its stand in its inner self, detach from all these things and people. It is this detachment that is the first thing that must be gained by the sadhak – he must cease to live in these outward things and live in his inner being. The more that is done the more there is a release and peacefulness. Afterwards when one is secure in this inner being, the right thing to do, the right way to deal with men and things will begin to come.⁸⁶

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It is true that anger and strife are in the nature of the human vital and do not go easily; but what is important is to have the will to change, and the clear perception that these things must go. If that will and perception are there, then in the end they will go. The most important help to it is, here also, for the psychic being to grow within – for that brings a certain kindliness, patience, charity towards all and one no longer regards everything from the point of view of one's own ego and its pain or pleasure, likings and dislikings. The second help is the growth of the inner peace which outward things cannot trouble. With the peace comes a calm wideness in which one perceives all as one self. . . .⁸⁷

Haste and Agitation

Agitation, haste, restlessness lead nowhere. It is foam on the sea; it is a great fuss that stops with itself. Men have a feeling that if they are not all the time running about and bursting into fits of feverish activity, they are doing nothing. It is an illusion to think that all these so-called movements change things. It is merely taking a cup and beating the water in it; the water is moved about, but it is not changed for all your beating. This illusion of action is one of the greatest illusions of human nature. It hurts progress because it brings on you the necessity of rushing always into some excited movement. If you could only perceive the illusion and see how useless it all is, how it changes nothing! Nowhere can you achieve anything by it. Those who are thus rushing about are the tools of forces that make them dance for their own amusement. And they are not forces of the best quality either.

Whatever has been done in the world has been done by the very few who can stand outside the action in silence; for it is they who are the instruments of the Divine Power. They are dynamic agents, conscious instruments; they bring down the forces that change the world. Things can be done in that way, not by a restless activity. In peace, in silence and in quietness the world was built; and each time that something is to be truly built, it is in peace and silence and quietness that it must be done. It is ignorance to believe that you must run from morning to night and labour at all sorts of futile things in order to do something for the world.

Once you step back from these whirling forces into quiet regions, you see how great is the illusion! Humanity

appears to you like a mass of blind creatures rushing about without knowing what they do or why they do it and only knocking and stumbling against each other. And it is this that they call action and life! It is empty agitation, not action, not true life.

I said once that, to speak usefully for ten minutes, you should remain silent for ten days. I could add that, to act usefully for one day, you should keep quiet for a year! Of course, I am not speaking of the ordinary day-to-day acts that are needed for the common external life, but of those who have or believe that they have something to do for the world. And the silence I speak of is the inner quietude that those alone have who can act without being identified with their action, merged into it and blinded and deafened by the noise and form of their own movement. Stand back from your action and rise into an outlook above these temporal motions; enter into the consciousness of Eternity. Then only you will know what true action is.⁸⁸

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We – I mean men – live harassed lives. It is a kind of half-awareness of the shortness of their lives; they do not think of it, but they feel it half-consciously. And so they are always wanting – quick, quick, quick – to rush from one thing to another, to do one thing quickly and move on to the next one, instead of letting each thing live in its own eternity. They are always wanting: forward, forward, forward.... And the work is spoilt.

That is why some people have preached: the only moment that matters is the present moment. In practice it is not true but from the psychological point of view it

ought to be true. That is to say, to live to the utmost of one's capacities at every minute, without planning or wanting, waiting or preparing for the next. Because you are always hurrying, hurrying, hurrying... And nothing you do is good. You are in a state of inner tension which is completely false – completely false.

All those who have tried to be wise have always said it – the Chinese preached it, the Indians preached it – to live in the awareness of Eternity. In Europe also they said that one should contemplate the sky and the stars and identify oneself with their infinitude – all things that widen you and give you peace.

These are means, but they are indispensable.

And I have observed this in the cells of the body; they always seem to be in a hurry to do what they have to do, lest they have no time to do it. So they do nothing properly. Muddled people – some people turn everything upside down, their movements are jerky and confused – have this to a high degree, this kind of haste – quick, quick, quick.... Yesterday, someone was complaining of rheumatic pains and he was saying, "Oh, it is such a waste of time, I do things so slowly!" I said (*Mother smiles*), "So what!" He didn't like it. You see, for someone to complain when he is in pain means that he is soft, that is all; but to say, "I am wasting so much time, I do things so slowly!" It gave a very clear picture of the haste in which men live. You go hurtling through life... to go where?... You end with a crash!⁸⁹

Feelings of Inferiority

. . . if you want to do something well, whatever it may be, any kind of work, the least thing, play a game, write a book, do painting or music or run a race, anything at all, if you want to do it well, you must *become* what you are doing and not remain a small person looking at himself doing it; for if one looks at oneself acting, one is... one is still in complicity with the ego. If, in oneself, one succeeds in becoming what one does, it is a great progress. In the least little details, one must learn this. Take a very amusing instance: you want to fill a bottle from another bottle; you concentrate (you may try it as a discipline, as a gymnastic); well, as long as you are the bottle to be filled, the bottle from which one pours, and the movement of pouring, as long as you are only this, all goes well. But if unfortunately you think at a given moment: "Ah! it is getting on well, I am managing well", the next minute it spills over! It is the same for everything, for everything. That is why work is a good means of discipline, for if you want to do the work properly, you must *become* the work instead of being someone who works, otherwise you will never do it well. If you remain "someone who works" and, besides, if your thoughts go vagabonding, then you may be sure that if you are handling fragile things they will break, if you are cooking, you will burn something, or if you are playing a game, you will miss all the balls! It is here, in this, that work is a great discipline. For if truly you want to do it well, this is the only way of doing it.

Take someone who is writing a book, for instance. If he looks at himself writing the book, you can't imagine how dull the book will become; it smells immediately of the

small human personality which is there and it loses all its value. When a painter paints a picture, if he observes himself painting the picture, the picture will never be good, it will always be a kind of projection of the painter's personality; it will be without life, without force, without beauty. But if, all of a sudden, he becomes the thing he wants to express, if he becomes the brushes, the painting, the canvas, the subject, the image, the colours, the value, the whole thing, and is entirely inside it and lives it, he will make something magnificent.

For everything, everything, it is the same. There is nothing which cannot be a yogic discipline if one does it properly. And if it is not done properly, even tapasya will be of no use and will lead you nowhere. For it is the same thing, if you do your tapasya, all the time observing yourself doing it and telling yourself, "Am I making any progress, is this going to be better, am I going to succeed?", then it is your ego, you know, which becomes more and more enormous and occupies the whole place, and there is no room for anything else....

What gives most the feeling of inferiority, of limitation, smallness, impotence, is always this turning back upon oneself, this shutting oneself up in the bounds of a microscopic ego. One must widen oneself, open the doors. And the best way is to be able to concentrate upon what one is doing instead of concentrating upon oneself.⁹⁰

Sensitiveness

One has not to cure oneself of one's sensitiveness, but only acquire the power to rise to a higher consciousness

taking such disenchantments as a sort of jumping-board. One way is not to expect even square dealings from others, no matter who the others are. And besides, it is good to have such experiences of the real nature of some people to which a generous nature is often blind; for that helps the growth of one's consciousness. The blow you wince at seems to you so hard because it is a blow the world of your mental formation has sustained. Such a world often becomes a part of our being. The result is that a blow dealt to it gives almost physical pain. The great compensation is that it makes you live more and more in the real world in contradistinction to the world of your imagination which is what you would like the real world to be. But the real world is not all that could be desired, you know, and that is why it has to be acted upon and transformed by the Divine Consciousness. But for that, knowledge of the reality, however unpalatable, is almost the first requisite. This knowledge often enough is best brought home to us through blows and bleedings. True, idealistic people, sensitive people, refined natures smart under such disillusionments more than do others who are somewhat thick-skinned, but that is no reason why fine feelings should be deprecated and the keen edge of fine susceptibilities be blunted. The thing is to learn to detach oneself from any such experience and learn to look at such perversions of others from a higher altitude from where one can regard these manifestations in the proper perspective – the impersonal one. Then our difficulties really and literally become opportunities. For knowledge, when it goes to the root of our troubles, has in itself a marvellous healing-power as it were. As soon as you touch the quick of the trouble, as soon as you, diving down and down, get

at what really ails you, the pain disappears as though by a miracle.⁹¹

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Equality means another thing – to have an equal view of men and their nature and acts and the forces that move them; it helps one to see the truth about them by pushing away from the mind all personal feeling in one's seeing and judgment and even all the mental bias. Personal feeling always distorts and makes one see in men's actions, not only the actions themselves, but things behind them which, more often than not, are not there. Misunderstanding, misjudgment which could have been avoided are the result; things of small consequence assume larger proportions. I have seen that more than half of the untoward happenings of this kind in life are due to this cause. But in ordinary life personal feeling and sensitiveness are a constant part of human nature and may be needed there for self-defence, although, I think, even there, a strong, large and equal attitude towards men and things would be a much better line of defence.⁹²

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Your surprise at X's behaviour shows that you do not yet know what kind of thing is the average human nature. Did you never hear of the answer of Vidyasagar when he was told that a certain man was abusing him, – "Why does he abuse me? I never did him a good turn (*upakāra*)."

The unregenerate vital is not grateful for a benefit, it resents being under an obligation. So long as the benefit con-

tinues, it is effusive and says sweet things, as soon as it expects nothing more it turns round and bites the hand that fed it. Sometimes it does that even before, when it thinks it can do it without the benefactor knowing the origin of the slander, fault-finding or abuse. In all these dealings of yours there is nothing unusual, nothing, as you think, peculiar to you. Most have this kind of experience, few escape it altogether. Of course, people with a developed psychic element are by nature grateful and do not behave in this way.⁹³

Jealousy

It is of course the old reaction – jealousy is certainly there, or you would not feel this violent sorrow. That it subsists still in the recesses and rises with such vehemence shows how deeply rooted this movement was in your physical consciousness. You have not been able to root it out because when it comes you associate yourself entirely with it and abandon yourself to its outcries and violence. You must have the strength to stand back from it in that part of your nature which is free – only then will you be able to push it away from you; and it is only if it is pushed away from you each time it rises that it will consent to disappear and return no more.⁹⁴

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I do not see why you make such a big difference between the quarrels and jealousy over other women and quarrels and jealousy over other attractions not of a sexual charac-

ter. They both spring from the same primary impulse, the possessive instinct which is at the base of ordinary vital love. In the latter case, as often sexual jealousy is not possible, the mind supports itself on other motives which seem to it quite reasonable and justifiable – it may not be conscious that it is being pushed by the vital, but the quarrels and the vivacity of the disagreement are there all the same. Whether you had or had not both forms of it, is not very material and does not make things better or worse. It is the getting rid of the instinct itself that matters, whether from the psychological point of view or from that of a spiritual change.⁹⁵

Transforming the Vital

Most men are, like animals, driven by the forces of Nature: whatever desires come, they fulfil them, whatever emotions come they allow them to play, whatever physical wants they have, they try to satisfy. We say then that the activities and feelings of men are controlled by their Prakriti, and mostly by the vital and physical nature. The body is the instrument of the Prakriti or Nature – it obeys its own nature or it obeys the vital forces of desire, passion, etc.

But man has also a mind and, as he develops, he learns to control his vital and physical nature by his reason and by his will. This control is very partial: for the reason is often deluded by vital desires and the ignorance of the physical and it puts itself on their side and tries to justify by its ideas, reasonings or arguments their mistakes and wrong movements. Even if the reason keeps free and tells

the vital or the body, "Do not do this", yet the vital and the body often follow their own movement in spite of the prohibition – man's mental will is not strong enough to compel them.

When people do sadhana, there is a higher nature that works within, the psychic and spiritual, and they have to put their nature under the influence of the psychic being and the higher spiritual self or of the Divine. Not only the vital and the body but the mind also has to learn the Divine Truth and obey the divine rule. But because of the lower nature and its continued hold on them, they are unable at first and for a long time to prevent their nature from following the old ways – even when they know or are told from within what to do or what not to do. It is only by persistent sadhana, by getting into the higher spiritual consciousness and spiritual nature that this difficulty can be overcome; but even for the strongest and best sadhaks it takes a long time.*

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The rejection of desire is essentially the rejection of the element of craving, putting that out from the consciousness itself as a foreign element not belonging to the true self and the inner nature. But refusal to indulge the suggestions of desire is also a part of the rejection; to abstain from the action suggested, if it is not the right action, must be included in the yogic discipline. It is only when this is done in the wrong way, by a mental ascetic principle or a hard moral rule, that it can be called suppression. The difference between suppression and an inward essential rejection is the difference between men-

tal or moral control and a spiritual purification.

When one lives in the true consciousness one feels the desires outside oneself, entering from outside, from the universal lower Prakriti, into the mind and the vital parts. In the ordinary human condition this is not felt; men become aware of the desire only when it is there, when it has come inside and found a lodging or a habitual harbourage and so they think it is their own and a part of themselves. The first condition for getting rid of desire is, therefore, to become conscious with the true consciousness; for then it becomes much easier to dismiss it than when one has to struggle with it as if it were a constituent part of oneself to be thrown out from the being. It is easier to cast off an accretion than to excise what is felt as a parcel of our substance.

When the psychic being is in front, then also to get rid of desire becomes easy; for the psychic being has in itself no desires, it has only aspirations and a seeking and love for the Divine and all things that are or tend towards the Divine. The constant prominence of the psychic being tends of itself to bring out the true consciousness and set right almost automatically the movement of the nature.⁹⁷

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Desire takes a long time to get rid of entirely. But, if you can once get it out of the nature and realise it as a force coming from outside and putting its claws into the vital and physical, it will be easier to get rid of the invader. You are too accustomed to feel it as part of yourself or planted in you – that makes it more difficult for you to deal with its movements and dismiss its ancient control over you.⁹⁸

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No one can easily get rid of desires. What has first to be done is to exteriorize them, to push them out, on the surface and get the inner parts quiet and clear. Afterwards they can be thrown out and replaced by the true thing, a happy and luminous will one with the Divine's.⁹⁹

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Desire is a psychological movement, and it can attach itself to a "true need" as well as to things that are not true needs. One must approach even true needs without desire. If one does not get them, one must feel nothing.¹⁰⁰

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It is true that the mere suppression or holding down of desire is not enough, not by itself truly effective, but that does not mean that desires are to be indulged; it means that desires have not merely to be suppressed, but to be rejected from the nature.¹⁰¹

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Your theory is a mistaken one. The free expression of a passion may relieve the vital for a time, but at the same time it gives it a right to return always. It is not reduced at all. Suppression with inner indulgence in subtle forms is not a cure, but expression in outer indulgence is still less a cure. It is perfectly possible to go on without manifestation if one is resolute to arrive at a complete control, the control being not a mere suppression but an inner and outer rejection.¹⁰²

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You do not seem to have a correct idea of the nature of vital desire. Vital desire grows by being indulged, it does not become satisfied. If your desire were indulged, it would begin to grow more and more and ask for more and more. That has been our constant experience with the sadhaks and it confirms what has always been known about desire. Desire and envy have to be thrown out of the consciousness – there is no other way to deal with them.¹⁰³

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Everything which it hankers after is desirable to the vital – but the desire has to be rejected. “I won’t desire” is quite the right thing to say, even if “I don’t desire” cannot yet be said by the vital. Still there is something in the being that can even say “I don’t desire” and refuse to recognise the vital desire as part of the true being. It is that consciousness which the peace and power bring that has to be recognised as the true “I” and made permanent in front.¹⁰⁴

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It is difficult to get rid of desires *altogether* all at once – if the right ones have the upper hand, that already makes the ultimate victory sure. Therefore don’t allow that to trouble you. A progressive change is the way these things work out – and if the progress has begun, then there can be a fundamental sense of certitude about the outcome of the sadhana and a quiet view upon what has to be done because it is sure to be done.¹⁰⁵

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How can one transform the vital?

The first step: will. Secondly, sincerity and aspiration. But will and aspiration are almost the same thing, one follows the other. Then, perseverance. Yes, perseverance is necessary in any process, and what is this process?... First, there must be the ability to observe and discern, the ability to find the vital in oneself, else you will be hard put to it to say: "This comes from the vital, this comes from the mind, this from the body." Everything will seem to you mixed and indistinct.

After a very sustained observation, you will be able to distinguish between the different parts and recognise the origin of a movement. Quite a long time is necessary for this, but one can go quite fast also, it depends upon people. But once you have found out the different parts ask yourself, "What is there of the vital in this? What does the vital bring into your consciousness? In what way does it change your movements; what does it add to them and what take away? What happens in your consciousness through the intervention of the vital?" Once you know this, what do you do?... Then you will need to watch this intervention, observe it, find out in what way it works. For instance, you want to transform your vital. You have a great sincerity in your aspiration and the resolution to go to the very end. You have all that. You start observing and you see that two things can happen (many things can happen) but mainly two.

First, a sort of enthusiasm takes hold of you. You set to work earnestly. In this enthusiasm you think, "I am going to do this and that, I am going to reach my goal immediately, everything is going to be magnificent! It will

see, this vital, how I am going to treat it if it doesn't obey!" And if you look carefully you will see that the vital is saying to itself, "Ah, at last, here's an opportunity!" It accepts, it starts working with all its zeal, all its enthusiasm and... all its impatience.

The second thing may be the very opposite. A sort of uneasiness: "I am not well, how tedious life is, how wearisome everything. How am I going to do all that? Will I ever reach the goal? Is it worthwhile beginning? Is it at all possible? Isn't it impossible?" It is the vital which is not very happy about what is going to be done for it, which does not want anyone to meddle in its affairs, which does not like all that very much. So it suggests depression, discouragement, a lack of faith, doubt – is it really worth the trouble?

These are the two extremes, and each has its difficulties, its obstacles.

Depression, unless one has a strong will, suggests, "This is not worth while, one may have to wait a lifetime." Enthusiasm, it expects to see the vital transformed overnight: "I am not going to have any difficulty henceforth, I am going to advance rapidly on the path of yoga, I am going to gain the divine consciousness without any difficulty." There are some other difficulties.... One needs a little time, much perseverance. So the vital, after a few hours – perhaps a few days, perhaps a few months – says to itself: "We haven't gone very far with our enthusiasm, has anything been really done? Doesn't this movement leave us just where we were? – perhaps worse than we were, a little troubled, a little disturbed? Things are no longer what they were, they are not yet what they ought to be. It is very tiresome, what I am doing." And then, if one

pushes a little more, here's this gentleman saying, "Ah! no, I have had enough of it, leave me alone. I don't want to move, I shall stay in my corner, I won't trouble you, but don't bother me!" and so one has not gone very much farther than before.

This is one of the big obstacles which must be carefully avoided. As soon as there is the least sign of discontentment, of annoyance, the vital must be spoken to in this way, "My friend, you are going to keep calm, you are going to do what you are asked to do, otherwise you will have to deal with me." And to the other, the enthusiast who says, "Everything must be done now, immediately", your reply is, "Calm yourself a little, your energy is excellent, but it must not be spent in five minutes. We shall need it for a long time, keep it carefully and, as it is wanted, I shall call upon your goodwill. You will show that you are full of goodwill, you will obey, you won't grumble, you will not protest, you will not revolt, you will say 'yes, yes.' You will make a little sacrifice when asked, you will say 'yes' whole-heartedly."

So we get started on the path. But the road is very long. Many things happen on the way. Suddenly one thinks one has overcome an obstacle; I say "thinks", because though one has overcome it, it is not totally overcome. I am going to take a very obvious instance, of a very simple observation. Someone has found that his vital is uncontrollable and uncontrolled, that it gets furious for nothing and about nothing. He starts working to teach it not to get carried away, not to flare up, to remain calm and bear the shocks of life without reacting violently. If one does this cheerfully, it goes quite quickly (note this well, it is very important: when you have to deal with your vital, take

care to keep your good humour, otherwise you will get into trouble). One keeps one's good humour, that is, when one sees the fury rise, one begins to laugh. Instead of being depressed and saying, "Ah! in spite of all my effort it is beginning all over again", one begins to laugh and says, "Well, well! one hasn't yet seen the end of it. Look now, aren't you ridiculous, you know quite well that you are being ridiculous! Is it worthwhile getting angry?" One gives it this lesson good-humouredly. And really, after a while it doesn't get angry again, it is quiet – and one relaxes one's attention. One thinks the difficulty has been overcome, one thinks a result has at last been reached: "My vital does not trouble me any longer, it does not get angry now, everything is going fine." And the next day, one loses one's temper. It is then one must be careful, it is then one must not say, "Here we are, it's no use, I shall never achieve anything, all my efforts are futile; all this is an illusion, it is impossible." On the contrary, one must say, "I wasn't vigilant enough." One must wait long, very long, before one can say, "Ah! it is done and finished." Sometimes one must wait for years, many years....¹⁰⁶

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All your troubles, depression, discouragement, disgust, fury, all, all come from the vital. It is that which turns love into hate, it is that which induces the spirit of vengeance, rancour, bad will, the urge to destroy and to harm. It is that which discourages you when things are difficult and not to its liking. And it has an extraordinary capacity for going on strike! When it is not satisfied, it hides in a corner and does not budge. And then you have no more

energy, no more strength, you have no courage left. Your will is like... like a withering plant. All resentment, disgust, fury, all despair, grief, anger – all that comes from this gentleman. For it is energy in action.

Therefore, it depends on which side it turns. And I tell you, it has a very strong habit of going on strike. That is its most powerful weapon: "Ah! you are not doing what I want, well, I am not going to move, I shall sham dead." And it does that for the least reason. It has a very bad character; it is very touchy and it is very spiteful – yes, it is very ill-natured. For I believe it is very conscious of its power and it feels clearly that if it gives itself wholly, there is nothing that will resist the momentum of its force. And like all people who have a weight in the balance, the vital also bargains: "I shall give you my energy, but you must do what I want. If you do not give me what I ask for, well, I withdraw my energy." And you will be flat as a pancake. And it is true, it happens like that.

It is difficult to regulate it. Yet naturally, when you have succeeded in taming it, you have something powerful in hand for realisation. It is that which can carry by storm the biggest obstacles. It is that which is capable of turning an idiot into an intelligent person – it alone can do so; for if one yearns passionately for progress, if the vital takes it into its head that one must progress, even the greatest idiot can become intelligent! I have seen this, I am not speaking from heresy; I have seen it, I have seen people who were dull, stupid, incapable of understanding, who understood nothing – you could go on explaining something to them for months, it would not enter, as though one were speaking to a block of wood – and then all of a sudden their vital was caught in a passion: they wanted

simply to please someone or get something, and for that one had to understand, one had to know, it was necessary. Well, they set everything moving, they shook up the sleeping mind, they poured energy into all the corners where there was none; and they understood, they became intelligent. I knew someone who knew nothing practically, understood nothing, and who, when the mind started moving and the passion for progress took possession of him, began to write wonderful things. I have them with me. And when the movement withdrew, when the vital went on strike (for sometimes it went on strike, and withdrew), the person became once again absolutely dull.

Naturally it is very difficult to establish a constant contact between the most external physical consciousness and the psychic consciousness, and oh! the physical consciousness has plenty of goodwill; it is very regular, it tries a great deal, but it is slow and heavy, it takes long, it is difficult to move it. It does not get tired, but it makes no effort; it goes its way, quietly. It can take centuries to put the external consciousness in contact with the psychic. But for some reason or other the vital takes a hand in it. A passion seizes it. It wants this contact (for some reason or other, which is not always a spiritual reason), but it wants this contact. It wants it with all its energy, all its strength, all its passion, all its fervour: in three months the thing is done.

So then, take great care of it. Treat it with great consideration but never submit to it. For it will drag you into all kinds of troublesome and untoward experiments; and if you succeed in convincing it in some way or other, then you will advance with giant strides on the path.¹⁰⁷

There are people who have a pretty little theory like that which I have often heard; they say that one's vital should never be repressed, it must be allowed to do all it wants, it will get tired and be cured! This is the height of stupidity! First, because the vital by its very nature is never satisfied, and if a certain kind of activity becomes insipid, it will double the dose: if its stupidities bore it, it will increase its stupidities and its excesses, and if that tires it, as soon as it has rested it will start again. For it will not be changed. Others say that if you sit upon your vital it will be suppressed and, one day, it will shoot up like a steam-jet... and this is true. Hence, to repress the vital is not a solution. To let it do what it likes is not a solution either, and generally this brings on fairly serious disorders. There must be a third solution.

To aspire that the light from above may come and purify it?

Obviously, but the problem remains. You aspire for a change, perhaps for a specific change; but the answer to your aspiration will not come immediately and in the meantime your nature will resist. Things happen like this: at a given moment the nature seems to have yielded and you think you have got the desired result. Your aspiration diminishes in intensity because you think you have the desired result. But the other fellow, who is very cunning and is waiting quietly in his corner, when you are off your guard, he springs up like a jack-in-the-box, and then you must begin all over again.

But if one can tear out completely the root of the thing?

Ah! one must not be so sure of that. I have known people who wanted to save the world by reducing it so much that there was no longer a world left! This is the ascetic way – you want to do away with the problem by doing away with the possibility of the problem. But this will never change anything.

No, there is a method – a sure one – but your method must be very clear-sighted and you must have a wide-awake consciousness of your person and of what goes on there and the way in which things happen. Let us take the instance of a person subject to outbursts of rage and violence. According to one method he would be told: "Get as angry as you like, you will suffer the consequences of your anger and this will cure you." This could be discussed. According to another method he would be told: "Sit upon your anger and it will disappear." This too could be discussed. In any case, you will have to sit upon it all the time, for if ever you should get up for a minute you will see immediately what happens! Then, what is to be done?

You must become more and more conscious. You must observe how the thing happens, by what road the danger approaches, and stand in the way before it can take hold of you. If you want to cure yourself of a defect or a difficulty, there is but one method: to be perfectly vigilant, to have a very alert and vigilant consciousness. First you must see very clearly what you want to do. You must not hesitate, be full of doubt and say, "Is it good to do this or not, does this come into the synthesis or should it not

come in?" You will see that if you trust your mind, it will always shuttle back and forth: it vacillates all the time. If you take a decision it will put before you all the arguments to show you that your decision is not good, and you will be tossed between the "yes" and "no", the black and white, and will arrive at nothing. Hence, first, you must know exactly what you want – know, not mentally, but through concentration, through aspiration and a very conscious will. That is the important point. Afterwards, gradually, by observation, by a sustained vigilance, you must realise a sort of method which will be personal to you – it is useless to convince others to adopt the same method as yours, for that won't succeed. Everyone must find his own method, everyone must have his own method, and to the extent you put into practice your method, it will become clearer and clearer, more and more precise. You can correct a certain point, make clear another, etc. So, you start working.... For a while, all will go well. Then, one day, you will find yourself facing an insurmountable difficulty and will tell yourself, "I have done all that and here is everything as bad as before!" Then, in this case, you must, through a yet more sustained concentration, open an inner door in you and bring into this movement a force which was not there formerly, a state of consciousness which was not there before. And there, there will be a power, when your own personal power will be exhausted and no longer effective. When the personal power runs out, ordinary people say, "That's good, I can no longer do anything, it is finished." But I tell you that when you find yourself before this wall, it is the beginning of something new. By an obstinate concentration, you must pass over to the other side of the wall and there you will find a new

knowledge, a new force, a new power, a new help, and you will be able to work out a new system, a new method which surely will take you very far.

I do not say this to discourage you; only, things happen like that. And the worst of all is to get discouraged when it happens. You must tell yourself, "With the means of transport at my disposal I have reached a certain point, but these means do not allow me to go further. What should I do?... Sit there and not stir any longer? – not at all. I must find other means of transport." This will happen quite often, but after a while you will get used to it. You must sit down for a moment, meditate, and then find other means. You must increase your concentration, your aspiration and your trust and with the new help which comes to you, make a new programme, work out other means to replace those you have left behind. This is how one progresses stage by stage.

But you must take great care to apply at each stage, as perfectly as possible, what you have gained or learnt. If you remain in an indrawn state of consciousness and do not apply materially the inner progress, a time will certainly come when you will not be able to move at all, for your outer being, unchanged, will be like a fetter pulling you back and hindering you from advancing. So, the most important point (what everybody says but only a few do) is to put into practice what you know. With that you have a good chance of succeeding, and with perseverance you will certainly get there.

You must never get discouraged when you find yourself before a wall, never say, "Oh! what shall I do? It is still there." In this way the difficulty will still be there and still there and still there, till the very end. It is only when you

reach the goal that everything will suddenly crumble down.¹⁰⁸

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What you have noticed about the disturbance is true. There are now two consciousnesses in you, the new one that is growing and what is left of the old. The old has something in it which is a habit of the human vital, – the tendency to keep any touch of grief, anger, vexation etc. or any kind of emotional, vital or mental disturbance, to make much of it, to prolong it, not to wish to let it go, to return to it even when the cause of disturbance is past and could be forgotten, always to remember and bring it up when it can. This is a common trait of human nature and a quite customary movement. The new consciousness on the contrary does not want these things and when they happen throws them off as quickly as possible. When the new consciousness is fully grown and established, then the disturbances will be altogether rejected. Even if the causes of them happen, there will be no response of grief, anger, vexation etc. in the nature.¹⁰⁹

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Your difficulty in getting rid of the aboriginal in your nature will remain so long as you try to change your vital part by the sole or main strength of your mind and mental will, calling in at most an indefinite and impersonal divine power to aid you. . . . If you want a true mastery and transformation of the vital movements, it can be done only on condition you allow your psychic being, the soul in

you, to awake fully, to establish its rule . . . impose its own way of pure devotion, whole-hearted aspiration and complete uncompromising urge to all that is divine on the mind and heart and vital nature.¹¹⁰

DISTURBANCES OF THE BODY AND PHYSICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Rest, Quiet, Goodwill

Take care to rest enough. You must guard against fatigue as it may bring relaxation and *tamas*. To rest well is not *tamas*, as some people suppose; it can be done in the right consciousness to maintain the bodily energy – like the *śavāsana* of the strenuous hathayogin.¹¹¹

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[After an attack of influenza:] The first thing to do is to keep throughout a perfect equanimity and not to allow thoughts of disturbed anxiety or depression to enter you. It is quite natural after this severe attack of influenza that there should be weakness and some fluctuations in the progress to recovery. What you have to do is to remain calm and confident and not worry or be restless – be perfectly quiet and prepared to rest as long as rest is needed. There is nothing to be anxious about; rest, and the health and strength will come.¹¹²

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The vital body surrounds the physical body with a kind of envelope which has almost the same density as the vibrations of heat observable when the day is very hot. And it is this which is the intermediary between the subtle body

and the most material vital body. It is this which protects the body from all contagion, fatigue, exhaustion and even from accidents. Therefore if this envelope is wholly intact, it protects you from everything, but a little too strong an emotion, a little fatigue, some dissatisfaction or any shock whatsoever is sufficient to scratch it as it were and the slightest scratch allows any kind of intrusion. Medical science also now recognises that if you are in perfect vital equilibrium, you do not catch illness or in any case you have a kind of immunity from contagion. If you have this equilibrium, this inner harmony which keeps the envelope intact, it protects you from everything. There are people who lead quite an ordinary life, who know how to sleep as one should, eat as one should, and their nervous envelope is so intact that they pass through all dangers as though unconcerned. It is a capacity one can cultivate in oneself. If one becomes aware of the weak spot in one's envelope, a few minutes' concentration, a call to the force, an inner peace is sufficient for it to be all right, get cured, and for the untoward thing to vanish.¹¹³

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It is particularly noticeable that all the digestive functions are extremely sensitive to an attitude that is critical, bitter, full of ill-will, to a sour judgement. Nothing disturbs the functioning of the digestion more than that. And it is a vicious circle: the more the digestive function is disturbed, the more unkind you become, critical, dissatisfied with life and things and people. So you can't find any way out. And there is only one cure: to deliberately drop this attitude, to absolutely forbid yourself to have it and to impose upon

yourself, by constant self-control, a deliberate attitude of all-comprehending kindness. Just try and you will see that you feel much better.¹¹⁴

Will, Discipline, Endurance

Wake up in yourself a will to conquer. Not a mere will in the mind but a will in the very cells of your body. Without that you can't do anything; you may take a hundred medicines but they won't cure you unless you have a will to overcome the physical illness.¹¹⁵

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The body is cured if it has decided to be cured.¹¹⁶

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Sweet Mother, how can one transform pain into forms of pleasure?

Ah! but that's not something to be done, my children. I shall certainly not give you the method! It is a perversion.

The first thing and the most indispensable is to nullify the pain by cutting the connection. You see, one becomes conscious of the pain because it is there.

For example, you have cut your finger, there's a nerve that has been affected, and so the nerve quickly goes to tell the brain, up there, that something has happened which is wrong, here. That is what gives you the pain to awaken your attention, to tell you: "You know, there's

something wrong." Then the thought immediately feels anxious: "What is wrong? Oh! how it hurts", etc., etc. – then returns to the finger and tries to arrange what is not yet destroyed. Usually one puts a small bandage. But in order not to have the pain, if it hurts very much, you must quite simply cut the connection by thought, saying to the nerve, "Now remain quiet, you have done your work, you have warned me, you don't need to say anything any longer; ploff! I am stopping you." And when you do it well you suffer no longer, it is finished, you stop the pain completely. That is the best thing. It is infinitely preferable to telling yourself that it is painful.¹¹⁷

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I don't think stammering has anything to do with sufficient lung-power nor is it caused by malformation of the vocal organs – it is commonly a nervous (physico-nervous) impediment and is perfectly curable. I can't say that I know of any especial device for it – people have used various kinds of devices to get over it, but behind them all will-power and a patient discipline of the utterance are indispensable.¹¹⁸

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In order to be cured, my child, not only is it necessary to stop all these unseemly practices completely, but it is necessary to get rid of all these unhealthy *desires* from your thought and sensation, for it is desires that irritate the organs and make them ill.¹¹⁹

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One thinks of curing an illness only because one suffers. If it caused you no unpleasantness, you would never think of being cured of it. So, in the economy of Nature I think that the first purpose of physical suffering was to give you a warning.

Unfortunately, there is the vital which pokes its nose into the affair and takes a very perverse pleasure in increasing, twisting, sharpening the suffering. Now this deforms the whole system because instead of being an indicator, sometimes it becomes an occasion for enjoying the illness, for making oneself interesting, and also having the opportunity to pity oneself – all kinds of things which all come from the vital and are all detestable, one more than another. But originally I think that it was this: “Take care!” You see, it’s like a danger-signal: “Take care, there’s something out of order.”

Only, when one is not very much coddled, when one has a little endurance and decides within himself not to pay too much attention, quite remarkably the pain diminishes. And there are a number of illnesses or states of physical imbalance which can be cured simply by removing the effect, that is, by stopping the suffering. Usually it comes back because the cause is still there. If the cause of the illness is found and one acts directly on its cause, then one can be cured radically. But if one is not able to do that, one can make use of this influence, of this control over pain in order – by cutting off the pain or eliminating it or mastering it in oneself – to work on the illness.¹²⁰

Preoccupation with Illness

You must not fear. Most of your troubles come from fear. In fact, ninety per cent of illnesses are the result of the subconscious fear of the body. In the ordinary consciousness of the body there is a more or less hidden anxiety about the consequences of the slightest physical disturbance. It can be translated by these words of doubt about the future: "And what will happen?" It is this anxiety that must be checked. Indeed this anxiety is a lack of confidence in the Divine's Grace, the unmistakable sign that the consecration is not complete and perfect.

As a practical means of overcoming this subconscious fear each time that something of it comes to the surface, the more enlightened part of the being must impress on the body the necessity of an entire trust in the Divine's Grace, the certitude that this Grace is always working for the best in our self as well as in all, and the determination to submit entirely and unreservedly to the Divine's Will.

The body must know and be convinced that its essence is divine and that if no obstacle is put in the way of the Divine's working, nothing can harm us. This process must be steadily repeated until all recurrence of fear is stopped. And then even if the illness succeeds in making its appearance, its strength and duration will be considerably diminished until it is definitively conquered.¹²¹

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You may have been told that certain bodily complaints will give you a great deal of pain. Things like that are often said. You then make a formation of fear and keep

expecting the pain. And the pain comes even when it need not.

But in case it is there after all, I can tell you one thing. If the consciousness is turned upward, the pain vanishes. If it is turned downward, the pain is felt and even increases. When one experiments with the upward and the downward turnings, one sees that the bodily complaint as such has nothing to do with the pain. The body may suffer very much or not at all, although its condition is exactly the same. It is the turn of the consciousness that makes all the difference.

I say "turned upward" because to turn towards the Divine is the best method, but what can be said in general is that if the consciousness is turned away from the pain to one's work or anything that interests one, the pain ceases.

And not only the pain but whatever damage there may be in an organ is set right much more easily when the consciousness is taken away from the trouble and one is open to the Divine. There is the Sat aspect of the Divine – the pure supreme Existence above or beyond or behind the cosmos. If you can keep in contact with it, all physical complaints can be removed.¹²²

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My advice is not to worry. The more you think of it, the more you concentrate upon it and, above all, the more you fear, the more you give a chance for the thing to grow.

If, on the contrary, you turn your attention and your interest elsewhere you increase the possibilities of cure.¹²³

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When I was twenty, a doctor told me that in cases of troubles of the stomach or intestines, the best thing is to continue eating as usual and not to bother about the trouble. He said, "If you have acidity, it will come from whatever food you take and the more you bother about it, the more it will increase. If you go on changing your food, in the end you will find that you cannot even drink a drop of water without getting into trouble. But if you remain normal and don't worry, you will become all right."

And I have found this advice to be quite true.¹²⁴

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In the effect of food on the body 90% belongs to the power of thought.¹²⁵

*

Physical troubles always come as lessons to teach *equality* and to reveal what in us is pure and luminous enough to remain unaffected. It is in equality that one finds the remedy.¹²⁶

*

Do not torment yourself and do not worry; above all try to banish all fear; fear is a dangerous thing which can give importance to something which had none at all. The mere fear of seeing certain symptoms renew themselves is enough to bring about this repetition.¹²⁷

Faith and Suggestion

The suggestions that create illness or unhealthy conditions of the physical being come usually through the subconscious – for a great part of the physical being, the most material part, is subconscient, i.e. to say, it has an obscure consciousness of its own but so obscure and shut up in itself that the mind does not know its movements or what is going on there. But all the same it is a consciousness and can receive suggestions from Forces outside, just as the mind and vital do. If it were not so, there would not be any possibility of opening it to the Force and the Force curing it; for without this consciousness in it it would not be able to respond. In Europe and America there are many people now who recognise this fact and treat their illnesses by making conscious mental suggestions to the body which counteract the obscure secret suggestions of illness in the subconscient. There was a famous Doctor in France who cured thousands of people by making them persistently put such counter-suggestions upon the body. That proves that illness has not a purely material cause, but is due to a disturbance of the secret consciousness in the body.¹²⁸

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By suggestion I do not mean merely thoughts or words. When the hypnotist says "sleep", it is a suggestion; but when he says nothing, but only puts his silent will to convey sleep or makes movements of his hands over the face, that also is a suggestion.

When a force is thrown on you or a vibration of illness, it carries to the body this suggestion. A wave comes in the

body – with a certain vibration in it, the body remembers “cold” or feels the vibrations of a cold and begins to cough or sneeze or to feel chill – the suggestion comes to the mind in the form “I am weak, I don’t feel well, I am catching a cold”.¹²⁹

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The body consciousness responds to the suggestion of the medicine and one gets cured for the time being or it doesn’t respond and there is no cure. How is it that the same medicine for the same illness succeeds with one man and not with another or succeeds at one time with a man and afterwards doesn’t succeed at all?¹³⁰

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A suggestion is not one’s own thought or feeling, but a thought or feeling that comes from outside, from others, from the general atmosphere or from external Nature, – if it is received, it sticks and acts on the being and is taken to be one’s own thought or feeling. If it is recognised as a suggestion, then it can be more easily got rid of. This feeling of doubt and self-distrust and hopelessness about oneself is a thing moving about in the atmosphere and trying to enter into people and be accepted; I want you to reject it, for its presence not only produces trouble and distress but stands in the way of restoration of health and return to the inner activity of the sadhana.

As for medical treatment it is sometimes a necessity. If one can cure by the Force as you have often done it is the best – but if for some reason the body is not able to respond to the Force (e.g. owing to doubt, lassitude or discouragement or for inability to react against the

disease), then the aid of medical treatment becomes necessary. It is not that the Force ceases to act and leaves all to the medicines, – it will continue to act through the consciousness but take the support of the treatment so as to act directly on the resistance in the body, which responds more readily to physical means in its ordinary consciousness.¹³¹

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Coué was a doctor. He used to treat by psychological treatment, auto-suggestion, and he called this the true working of the imagination; and what he defined as imagination was faith. And so he treated all his patients in this way: they had to make a kind of imaginative formation which consisted in thinking themselves cured or in any case on the way to being cured, and in repeating this formation to themselves with sufficient persistence for it to have its effect. He had very remarkable results. He cured lots of people; only, he failed also, and perhaps these were not very lasting cures, I don't know this. But in any case, this made many people reflect on something that's quite true and of capital importance: that the mind is a formative instrument and that if one knows how to use it in the right way, one gets a good result. He observed – and I think it is true, my observation agrees with his – that people spend their time thinking wrongly. Their mental activity is almost always half pessimistic, and even half destructive. They are all the time thinking of and foreseeing bad things which may happen, troublesome consequences of what they have done, and they construct all kinds of catastrophes with an exuberant imagination

which, if it were utilised in the other way, would naturally have opposite and more satisfying results.

If you observe yourself, if you... how to put it?... if you catch yourself thinking – well, if you do it suddenly, if you look at yourself thinking all of a sudden, spontaneously, unexpectedly, you will notice that nine times out of ten you are thinking something troublesome. It is very rarely that you are thinking about harmonious, beautiful, constructive, happy things, full of hope, light and joy; you will see, try the experiment. Suddenly stop and look at yourself thinking, just like that: put a screen in front of your thought and look at yourself thinking, off-hand, you will see this at least nine times out of ten, and perhaps more. (It is very rarely, very rarely that one has in the whole day, suddenly, a dazzling thought about what is going to happen or the state one is in or the things one wants to do or the course of his life or world circumstances – it depends, you see, on your preoccupation). Well, you will see, it is almost always foreseeing a bigger or smaller, more or less vast catastrophe.

Say you have the slightest thing that is not getting on quite well; if you think of your body, it is always that something unpleasant is going to happen to it – because when everything goes well, you don't think about it! You will notice this: that you act, you do all that you have to do, without having a single thought about your body, and when all of a sudden you wonder whether there isn't anything that's going wrong, whether there is some uneasiness or a difficulty, something, then you begin to think of your body and you think about it with anxiety and begin to make your disastrous constructions.

Whereas Coué recommended... It was in this way that

he cured his patients; he was a doctor, he told them. "You are going to repeat to yourself: 'I am being cured, gradually I am getting cured' and again, you see, 'I am strong, I am quite healthy and I can do this, I can do that'." ¹³²

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Imagination is a power of formation. In fact, people who have no imagination are not formative from the mental point of view, they cannot give a concrete power to their thought. Imagination is a very powerful means of action. For instance, if you have a pain somewhere and if you imagine that you are making the pain disappear or are removing it or destroying it – all kinds of images like that – well, you succeed perfectly.

There's a story of a person who was losing her hair at a fantastic rate, enough to become bald within a few weeks, and then someone told her, "When you brush your hair, imagine that it is growing and will grow very fast." And always, while brushing her hair, she said, "Oh! my hair is growing, oh! it will grow very fast...." – And it happened! But what people usually do is to tell themselves, "Ah! all my hair is falling again and I shall become bald, that's certain, it's going to happen!"

And of course it happens! ¹³³

Medicines

It is very good if one can get rid of illness entirely by faith and yoga-power or the influx of the Divine Force. But very often this is not altogether possible, because the

whole nature is not open or able to respond to the Force. The mind may have faith and respond, but the lower vital and the body may not follow. Or, if the mind and vital are ready, the body may not respond, or may respond only partially, because it has the habit of replying to the forces which produce a particular illness, and habit is a very obstinate force in the material part of the nature. In such cases the use of the physical means can be resorted to, — not as the main means, but as a help or material support to the action of the Force. Not strong and violent remedies, but those that are beneficial without disturbing the body.¹³⁴

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For nearly forty years behind the wholly good I was weakly in constitution; I suffered constantly from the smaller and the greater ailments and mistook this curse for a burden that Nature had laid upon me. When I renounced the aid of medicines, then they began to depart from me like disappointed parasites. Then only I understood what a mighty force was the natural health within me and how much mightier yet the Will and Faith exceeding mind which God meant to be the divine support of our life in this body.¹³⁵

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Medicine is necessary for our bodies in disease only because our bodies have learned the art of not getting well without medicines. Even so, one sees often that the moment Nature chooses for recovery is that in which the life is abandoned as hopeless by the doctors.

Distrust of the curative power within us was our physical fall from Paradise. Medical Science and a bad heredity are the two angels of God who stand at the gates to forbid our return and re-entry.

Medical Science to the human body is like a great Power which enfeebles a smaller State by its protection or like a benevolent robber who knocks his victim flat and riddles him with wounds in order that he may devote his life to healing and serving the shattered body.

Drugs often cure the body when they do not merely trouble or poison it, but only if their physical attack on the disease is supported by the force of the spirit; if that force can be made to work freely, drugs are superfluous.¹³⁶

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Certainly, one can act from within on an illness and cure it. Only it is not always easy as there is much resistance in Matter, resistance of inertia. An untiring persistence is necessary; at first one may fail altogether or the symptoms increase, but gradually the control of the body or of a particular illness becomes stronger. Again, to cure an occasional attack of illness by inner means is comparatively easy, to make the body immune from it in future is more difficult. A chronic malady is harder to deal with, more reluctant to disappear entirely than an occasional disturbance of the body. So long as the control of the body is imperfect, there are all these and other imperfections and difficulties in the use of the inner force.

If you can succeed by the inner action in preventing

increase, even that is something; you have then by *abhyāsa* to strengthen the power till it becomes able to cure. Note that so long as the power is not entirely there, some aid of physical means need not be altogether rejected.¹³⁷

Healing the Nerves

Your ailment is evidently in its foundation an illness of the nerves and not an ordinary physical disease. These maladies are a creation of the pressure of hostile forces; they increase if anything in you assents to them and accepts, and the more the mind gives value to them and dwells on them, the more they grow. The only way is to remain quiet, dissociate yourself and refuse to accept it or make much of it, allow the calm and strength that the Mother has been putting around you to enter your mind and permeate your nervous system. To do otherwise is to place yourself on the side of the hostile forces that are afflicting you. The cure may take long because your nervous system has been long subjected to these influences and, when they are evicted, they return with violence to re-establish their hold. But if you can acquire and keep patience and fortitude and the right consciousness and right attitude with regard to these things, the hold they have will progressively disappear.¹³⁸

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The fact that you feel weak when talking with people shows that the origin of the trouble is a weakened nervous

force. It is this that you have to get strong. You should avoid much talking with others – you can also take rest when you feel the symptoms very strong. But faith, quietude and openness to the higher force are the fundamental cure.¹³⁹

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What you have to do is, first of all, to recover your health; then, with a quiet mind to determine your aim in life according to your capacities and preference. It is not for me to make up your mind for you. I can only indicate to you what I myself think should be the proper aims and ideals.

Apart from external things there are two possible inner ideals which a man can follow. The first is the highest ideal of ordinary human life and the other the divine ideal of yoga. . . . The ideal of human life is to establish over the whole being the control of a clear, strong and rational mind and a right and rational will, to master the emotional, vital and physical being, create a harmony of the whole and develop the capacities whatever they are and fulfil them in life. In the terms of Hindu thought, it is to enthrone the rule of the purified and sattwic *buddhi*, follow the *dharma*, fulfilling one's own *svadharma* and doing the work proper to one's capacities, and satisfy *kāma* and *artha* under the control of the *buddhi* and the *dharma*. The object of the divine life, on the other hand, is to realise one's highest self or to realise God and to put the whole being into harmony with the truth of the highest self or the law of the divine nature, to find one's own divine capacities great or small and fulfil them in life as a

sacrifice to the highest or as a true instrument of the divine Shakti. About the latter ideal I may write at some later time. At present, I shall only say something about the difficulty you feel in fulfilling the ordinary ideal.

This ideal involves the building of mind and character and is always a slow and difficult process demanding patient labour of years, sometimes the better part of the life-time. The chief difficulty in the way with almost everybody is the difficulty of controlling the desires and impulses of the vital being. In many cases as in yours, certain strong impulses run persistently counter to the ideal and demand of the reason and the will. The cause is almost always a weakness of the vital being itself, for when there is this weakness it finds itself unable to obey the dictates of the higher mind and obliged to act instead under waves of impulsion that come from certain forces in nature. These forces are really external to the person but find in this part of him a sort of mechanical readiness to satisfy and obey them. The difficulty is aggravated if the *seat* of the weakness is in the nervous system. There is then what is called by European science a neurasthenia tendency and under certain circumstances it leads to nervous breakdowns and collapse. This happens when there is too great a strain on the nerves or when there is excessive indulgence of the sexual or other propensities and sometimes also when there is too acute and prolonged a struggle between the restraining mental will and these propensities. This is the illness from which you are suffering and if you consider these facts you will see the real reason why you broke down at Pondicherry. The nervous system in you was weak; it could not obey the will and resist the demand of the external, vital forces, and in the

struggle there came an overstrain of the mind and the nerves and a collapse taking the form of an acute attack of neurasthenia. These difficulties do not mean that you cannot prevail and bring about a control of your nerves and vital being and build up a harmony of mind and character. Only you must understand the thing rightly, not indulging in false and morbid ideas about it and you must use the right means. What is needed is a quiet mind and a quiet will, patient, persistent, refusing to yield either to excitement or discouragement, but always insisting tranquilly on the change needed in the being. A quiet will of this kind cannot fail in the end. Its effect is inevitable. It must first reject in the waking state, not only the acts habitual to the vital being, but the impulses behind them which it must understand to be external to the person even though manifested in him and also the suggestions which are behind the impulses. When thus rejected, the once habitual thoughts and movements may still manifest in the dream-state, because it is a well-known psychological law that what is suppressed or rejected in the waking state may still recur in sleep and dream because they are still there in the subconscious being. But if the waking state is thoroughly cleared, these dream-movements must gradually disappear because they lose their food and the impressions in the subconscious are gradually effaced. This is the cause of the dreams of which you are so much afraid. You should see that they are only a subordinate symptom which need not alarm you if you can once get control of your waking condition.

But you must get rid of the ideas which have stood in the way of effecting the self-conquest.

1. Realise that these things in you do not come from

any true moral depravity, for that can exist only when the mind itself is corrupted and supports the perverse vital impulses. Where the mind and the will reject them, the moral being is sound and it is a case only of a weakness or malady of the vital parts or the nervous system.

2. Do not brood on the past but turn your face with a patient hope and confidence towards the future. To brood on past failure will prevent you from recovering your health and will weaken your mind and will, hampering them in the work of self-conquest and rebuilding of the character.

3. Do not yield to discouragement if success does not come at once, but continue patiently and steadfastly until the thing is done.

4. Do not torture your mind by always dwelling on your weaknesses. Do not imagine that they unfit you for life or for the fulfilment of the human ideal. Once having recognised that they are there, seek for your sources of strength and dwell rather on them and the certainty of conquest.

Your first business is to recover your health of mind and body and that needs quietness of mind and for some time a quiet way of living. Do not rack your mind with questions which it is not yet ready to solve. Do not brood always on the one thing. Occupy your mind as much as you can with healthy and normal suggestions and give it as much rest as possible. Afterwards when you have your right mental condition and balance, then you can with a clear judgment decide how you will shape your life and what you have to do in the future.

I have given you the best advice I can and told you what seems to me the most important for you at present. As for your coming to Pondicherry, it is better not to do so just

now. I could say to you nothing more than what I have written. It is best for you so long as you are ill not to leave your father's care, and, above all, it is the safe rule in illnesses like yours not to return to the place and surroundings where you had the breakdown until you are perfectly recovered and the memories and associations connected with it have faded in intensity, lost their hold on the mind and can no longer produce upon it a violent or disturbing impression.¹⁴⁰

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There is no real reason for discontent or dissatisfaction with yourself – since progress is being made in spite of the resistance of the lower forces. The pressure which is translated by the heaviness in the stomach has to be got rid of – it is there that there is the chief resistance still. Peace within and a cheerful confidence and gladness without is what is wanted – then this kind of nervous pressure and disorder would cease.¹⁴¹

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The main difficulty seems to be that you are too subject to an excitement of the nerves – it is only by bringing quietude and calm into the whole being that a steady progress in the sadhana can be assured.

The first thing to be done in order to recover is to stop yielding to the attack of the nerves – the more you yield and identify yourself with these ideas and feelings, the more they increase. You have to draw back and find back something in you that is not affected by pains and depres-

sions, then from there you can get rid of the pains and depressions.¹⁴²

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These are phenomena of self-identification. Only, they are involuntary. And this is also one of the methods used today to cure nervous diseases. When someone cannot sleep, cannot be restful because he is too excited and nervous and his nerves are ill and weakened by excessive agitation, he is told to sit in front of an aquarium, for instance – an aquarium, that's very lovely, isn't it? – before an aquarium with pretty little fish in it, goldfish; just to sit there, settle down in an easy-chair and try not to think of anything (particularly not of his troubles) and look at the fish. So he looks at the fish, moving around, coming and going, swimming, gliding, turning, meeting, crossing, chasing one another indefinitely, and also the water flowing slowly and the passing fish. After a while he lives the life of fishes: he comes and goes, swims, glides, plays. And at the end of the hour his nerves are in a perfect state and he is completely restful!

But the condition is that one must not think of one's troubles, simply watch the fish.¹⁴³

DISTURBANCES OF THE SUBCONSCIENT

How to Deal with the Subconscient

The subconscious is not the whole foundation of the nature; it is only the lower basis of the Ignorance and affects mostly the lower vital and physical exterior consciousness and these again affect the higher parts of the nature. While it is well to see what it is and how it acts, one must not be too preoccupied with this dark side or this apparent aspect of the instrumental being. One should rather regard it as something not oneself, a mask of false nature imposed on the true being by the Ignorance. The true being is the inner with all its vast possibilities of reaching and expressing the Divine and especially the inmost, the soul, the psychic Purusha which is always in its essence pure, divine, turned to all that is good and true and beautiful. The exterior being has to be taken hold of by the inner being and turned into an instrument no longer of the upsurging of the ignorant subconscious Nature, but of the Divine. It is by remembering always that and opening the nature upwards that the Divine Consciousness can be reached and descend from above into the whole inner and outer existence, mental, vital, physical, the subconscious, the subliminal, all that we overtly or secretly are. This should be the main preoccupation. To dwell solely on the subconscious and the aspect of imperfection creates depression and should be avoided. One has to keep a right balance and stress on the positive side

most, recognising the other but only to reject and change it.¹⁴⁴

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The action of the subconscious is irrational, mechanical, repetitive. It does not listen to reason or the mental will. It is only by bringing the higher Light and Force into it that it can change.¹⁴⁵

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When a habitual movement long embedded in the nature is cast out, it takes refuge in some less enlightened part of the nature, and when cast out of the rest of the nature, it takes refuge in the subconscious and from there surges up when you least expect it or comes up in dreams or sudden unconscious movements or it goes out and remains in wait in the environmental being through which the universal Nature works and attacks from there as a force from outside trying to recover its kingdom by a suggestion or repetition of old movements. One has to stand fast till the power of return fades away. These returns or attacks must be regarded not as parts of oneself, but as invasions – and rejected without allowing any depression or discouragement. If the mind does not sanction them, if the vital refuses to welcome them, if the physical remains steady and refuses to obey the physical urge, then the recurrence of the thought, the vital impulse, the physical feeling will begin to lose its last holds and finally they will be too feeble to cause any trouble.¹⁴⁶

Subconscious Habits

It is the habit in the subconscious material that feels an artificial need created by the past and does not care whether it is harmful or disturbing to the nerves or not. That is the nature of all intoxicants (wine, tobacco, cocaine etc.), people go on even after the deleterious effects have shown themselves and even after all real pleasure in it has ceased because of this artificial need (it is not real). The will has to get hold of this subconscious persistence and dissolve it.¹⁴⁷

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It is certainly the abrupt and decisive breaking that is the easiest and best way for these things – vital habits.¹⁴⁸

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First of all one must be conscious, then control, and by continuing the mastery one changes one's character. Changing the character is what comes last. One must control bad habits, the old habits, for a very long time for them to drop off and the character to change.

We may take the example of someone who has frequent depressions. When things are not exactly as he would like them to be, he becomes depressed. So, to begin with, he must become aware of his depression – not only of the depression but of the causes of depression, why he gets depressed so easily. Then, once he has become conscious, he must master the depressions, must stop being depressed even when the cause of depression is

there – he must master his depression, stop it from coming. And finally, after this work has been done for a sufficiently long time, the nature loses the habit of having depressions and no longer reacts in the same way, the nature is changed.¹⁴⁹

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The subconscious is the support of habitual action – it can support good habits as well as bad.¹⁵⁰

Collective Subconscious Influences

One is born with a slough to clean before one begins to live. And once you have made a good start on the way to the inner transformation and you go down to the subconscious root of the being – that exactly which comes from parents, from atavism – well, you do see what it is! and all, almost all difficulties are there, there are very few things added to existence after the first years of life. This happens at any odd moment; if you keep bad company or read bad books, the poison may enter you; but there are all the imprints deep-rooted in the subconscious, the dirty habits you have and against which you struggle. For instance, there are people who can't open their mouth without telling a lie and they don't always do this deliberately (that is the worst of it), or people who can't come in touch with others without quarrelling, all sorts of stupidities – they are there in the subconscious, deeply rooted. Now, when you have a goodwill, externally you do your best to avoid all that, to correct it if possible; you work,

you fight; then become aware that this thing always keeps coming up, it comes up from some part which escapes your control. But if you enter this subconscious, if you let your consciousness infiltrate it, and look carefully, gradually you will discover all the sources, all the origins of all your difficulties; then you will begin to understand what your fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers were, and if at a certain moment you are unable to control yourself, you will understand, "I am like that because they were like that."

If you have within you a psychic being sufficiently awake to watch over you, to prepare your path, it can draw towards you things which help you, draw people, books, circumstances, all sorts of little coincidences which come to you as though brought by some benevolent will and give you an indication, a help, a support to take decisions and turn you in the right direction. But once you have taken this decision, once you have decided to find the truth of your being, once you start sincerely on the road, then everything seems to conspire to help you to advance, and if you observe carefully, you see gradually the source of your difficulties: "Ah! wait a minute, this failing was in my father; oh! this habit was my mother's; oh! my grandmother was like this, my grandfather was like that" or it could well be the nurse who took care of you when you were small, or brothers and sisters who played with you, the little friends you met, and you will find that all this was there, in this person or that or the other. But if you continue to be sincere, you find you can cross all this quite calmly, and after a time you cut all the moorings with which you were born, break the chains and go freely on the path.

If you really want to transform your character, it is that you must do. It has always been said that it is impossible to change one's nature; in all books of philosophy, even of yoga, you are told the same story: "You cannot change your character, you are born like that, you are like that." This is absolutely false, I guarantee it is false; but there is something very difficult to do to change your character, because it is not your character which must be changed, it is the character of your antecedents. In them you will not change it (because they have no such intention), but it is in you that it must be changed. It is what they have given you, all the little gifts made to you at your birth – nice gifts – it is this which must be changed. But if you succeed in getting hold of the thread of these things, the true thread, since you have worked upon this with perseverance and sincerity, one fine morning you will be free; all this will fall off from you and you will be able to get a start in life without any burden. Then you will be a new man, living a new life, almost with a new nature. And if you look back you will say, "It is not possible, I was never like that!"¹⁵¹

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When a being is born upon earth, he is inevitably born in a certain country and a certain environment. Due to his physical parents he is born in a set of social, cultural, national, sometimes religious circumstances, a set of habits of thinking, of understanding, of feeling, conceiving, all sorts of constructions which are at first mental, then become vital habits and finally material modes of being. To put things more clearly, you are born in a certain society or religion, in a particular country, and this

society has a collective conception of its own and this nation has a collective conception of its own, this religion has a collective "construction" of its own which is usually very fixed. You are born into it. Naturally, when you are very young, you are altogether unaware of it, but it acts on your formation – that formation, that slow formation through hours and hours, through days and days, experiences added to experiences, which gradually builds up a consciousness. You are underneath it as beneath a bell-glass. It is a kind of construction which covers and in a way protects you, but in other ways limits you considerably. All this you absorb without even being aware of it and this forms the subconscious basis of your own construction. This subconscious basis will act on you throughout your life, if you do not take care to free yourself from it. And to free yourself from it, you must first of all become aware of it; and the first step is the most difficult, for this formation was so subtle, it was made when you were not yet a conscious being, when you had just fallen altogether dazed from another world into this one (*laughing*) and it all happened without your participating in the least in it. Therefore, it does not even occur to you that there could be something to know there, and still less something you must get rid of. And it is quite remarkable that when for some reason or other you do become aware of the hold of this collective suggestion, you realise at the same time that a very assiduous and prolonged labour is necessary in order to get rid of it. But the problem does not end there.

You live surrounded by people. These people themselves have desires, stray wishes, impulses which are expressed through them and have all kinds of causes, but

take in their consciousness an individual form. For example, to put it in very practical terms: you have a father, a mother, brothers, sisters, friends, comrades; each one has his own way of feeling, willing, and all those with whom you are in relation expect something from you, even as you expect something from them. That something they do not always express to you, but it is more or less conscious in their being, and it makes formations. These formations, according to each one's capacity of thought and the strength of his vitality, are more or less powerful, but they have their own little strength which is usually much the same as yours; and so what those around you want, desire, hope or expect from you enters in this way in the form of suggestions very rarely expressed, but which you absorb without resistance and which suddenly awaken within you a similar desire, a similar will, a similar impulse.... This happens from morning to night, and again from night to morning, for these things don't stop while you are sleeping, but on the contrary are very often intensified because your consciousness is no longer awake, watching and protecting you to some extent.

And this is quite common, so common that it is quite natural and so natural that you need special circumstances and most unusual occasions to become aware of it. Naturally, it goes without saying that your own responses, your own impulses, your own wishes have a similar influence on others, and that all this becomes a marvellous mixture in which might is always right!

If that were the end of the problem, one could yet come out of the mess; but there is a complication. This terrestrial world, this human world is constantly invaded by the

forces of the neighbouring world, that is, of the vital world, the subtler region beyond the fourfold earth-atmosphere;* and this vital world which is not under the influence of the psychic forces or the psychic consciousness is essentially a world of ill-will, of disorder, disequilibrium, indeed of all the most anti-divine things one could imagine. This vital world is constantly penetrating the physical world, and being much more subtle than the physical, it is very often quite imperceptible except to a few rare individuals. There are entities, beings, wills, various kinds of individualities in that world, who have all kinds of intentions and make use of every opportunity either to amuse themselves if they are small beings or to do harm and create disorder if they are beings with a greater capacity. And the latter have a very considerable power of penetration and suggestion, and wherever there is the least opening, the least affinity, they rush in, for it is a game which delights them.

Besides, they are very thirsty or hungry for certain human vital vibrations which for them are a rare dish they love to feed upon; and so their game lies in exciting pernicious movements in man so that man may emanate these forces and they be able to feed on them just as they please. All movements of anger, violence, passion, desire, all these things which make you abruptly throw off certain energies from yourself, project them from yourself, are exactly what these entities of the vital world like best, for, as I said, they enjoy them like a sumptuous dish. Now, their tactics are simple: they send you a little suggestion, a little impulse, a small vibration which enters deep into you

*Consisting of the four principles: physical, vital, mental and psychic.

and through contagion or sympathy awakens in you the vibration necessary to make you throw off the force they want to absorb.

There it is a little easier to recognise the influence, for, if you are the least bit attentive, you become aware of something that has suddenly awakened within you. For example, those who are in the habit of losing their temper, if they have attempted ever so little to control their anger, they will find something coming from outside or rising from below which actually takes hold of their consciousness and arouses anger in them. I don't mean that everybody is capable of this discernment; I am speaking of those who have tried to understand their being and control it. These adverse suggestions are easier to distinguish than, for instance, your response to the will or desire of a being who is of the same nature as yourself, another human being, who consequently acts on you without this giving you a clear impression of something coming from outside: the vibrations are too alike, too similar in their nature, and you have to be much more attentive and have a much sharper discernment to realise that these movements which seem to come out from you are not really yours but come from outside. But with the adverse forces, if you are in the least sincere and observe yourself attentively, you become aware that it is something in the being which is responding to an influence, an impulse, a suggestion, even something at times very concrete, which enters and produces similar vibrations in the being.

There now. That is the problem.

The remedy?... It is always the same: goodwill, sincerity, insight, patience – oh! an untiring patience and a perseverance which assures you that what you have not

succeeded in doing today, you will succeed in doing another time, and makes you go on trying until you do succeed.

And this brings us back to Sri Aurobindo's sentence: if this control seems to you quite impossible today, well, that means that not only will it be possible, but that it will be realised later.¹⁵²

THE PSYCHIC BEING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH

The Psychic – Source of Inner Well-Being

The ease and peace are felt very deep and far within because they are in the psychic and the psychic is very deep within us, covered over by the mind and vital. When you meditate you open to the psychic, become aware of your psychic consciousness deep within and feel these things. In order that these ease and peace and happiness may become strong and stable and felt in all the being and in the body, you have to go still deeper within and bring out the full force of the psychic into the physical. This can most easily be done by regular concentration and meditation with the aspiration for this true consciousness. It can be done by work also, by dedication, by doing the work for the Divine only without thought of self. . . .¹⁵³

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In the human consciousness everything is *very slow*. When we compare the time that is necessary to realise something with the average length of human existence, it seems interminable. But happily there comes a time when one escapes from this notion, when one begins to feel no longer according to human measures. As soon as one is truly in touch with the psychic, one loses this kind of narrowness and of agony also, this agony which is *so bad*: "I must be quick, I must be quick, there is not much time,

I must hurry, there is not much time." One does things very badly or doesn't do them at all any more. But as soon as there is a contact with the psychic, then indeed this disappears; one begins to be a little more vast and calm and peaceful, and to live in eternity.¹⁵⁴

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Psychic poise means the poise of the being which comes from the fact that the psychic, which governs the movements of the being, is the master of all the movements of the consciousness. The psychic is always well poised. So when it is active and governs the being, it inevitably brings a balance.¹⁵⁵

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Already future teachers and future students are beginning to arrive, some from outside, new to the climate and customs of the country. They are arriving in the Ashram for the first time and know nothing of its life or its customs. Some of them come with a mental aspiration, either to serve or to learn; others come in the hope of doing yoga, of finding the Divine and uniting with Him; finally there are those who want to devote themselves entirely to the divine work upon earth. All of them come impelled by their psychic being, which wants to lead them towards self-realisation. They come with their psychic in front and ruling their consciousness; they have a psychic contact with people and things. Everything seems beautiful and good to them, their health improves, their consciousness grows more luminous; they feel happy, peace-

ful and safe; they think that they have reached their utmost possibility of consciousness. This peace and fullness and joy given by the psychic contact they naturally find everywhere, in everything and everybody. It gives an openness towards the true consciousness pervading here and working out everything. So long as the openness is there, the peace, the fullness and the joy remain with their immediate results of progress, health and fitness in the physical, quietness and goodwill in the vital, clear understanding and broadness in the mental and a general feeling of security and satisfaction. But it is difficult for a human being to keep up a constant contact with his psychic. As soon as he settles down and the freshness of the new experience fades away, the old person comes back to the surface with all its habits, preferences, small manias, shortcomings and misunderstandings; the peace is replaced by restlessness, the joy vanishes, the understanding is blinded and the feeling that the place is the same as everywhere else creeps in, because one has become what one was everywhere else. Instead of seeing only what has been accomplished, he becomes aware more and more and almost exclusively of what has yet to be done; he becomes morose and discontented and blames people and things instead of blaming himself. He complains of the lack of comfort, of the unbearable climate, of the unsuitable food that makes his digestion painful. Taking support from Sri Aurobindo's teaching that the body is an indispensable basis of yoga, that it should not be neglected and that, on the contrary, great care should be given to it, the physical consciousness concentrates almost exclusively on the body and tries to find ways of satisfying it. This is practically impossible, for, with a very few exceptions, the

more it is given, the more it demands. Besides, the physical being is ignorant and blind; it is full of false notions, preconceived ideas, prejudices and preferences. Indeed, it cannot deal effectively with the body. Only the psychic consciousness has the knowledge and insight needed to do the right thing in the right way.

You might well ask, what is the remedy for this state of affairs? For here we are going round in a vicious circle, since the whole trouble comes from drawing away from the psychic and only the psychic can find the solution to the problems. There is consequently only one remedy: be on your guard, hold fast to the psychic, do not allow anything in your consciousness to slip in between your psychic and yourself, close your ears and your understanding to all other suggestions and rely only on the psychic.

. . . And if in spite of all your efforts the horizon sometimes darkens, if hope and joy fade away, if enthusiasm flags, remember that it is a sign that you have drawn away from your psychic being and lost contact with its ideal. In this way you will avoid making the mistake of throwing the blame on the people and things around you and thus quite needlessly increasing your sufferings and your difficulties.¹⁵⁶

EXERCISES FOR GROWTH AND MASTERY

Stepping Back

Most of you live on the surface of your being, exposed to the touch of external influences. You live almost projected, as it were, outside your own body, and when you meet some unpleasant being similarly projected you get upset. The whole trouble arises out of your not being accustomed to stepping back. You must always step back into yourself – learn to go deep within – step back and you will be safe. Do not lend yourself to the superficial forces which move in the outside world. Even if you are in a hurry to do something, step back for a while and you will discover to your surprise how much sooner and with what greater success your work can be done. If someone is angry with you, do not be caught in his vibrations but simply step back and his anger, finding no support or response, will vanish. Always keep your peace, resist all temptation to lose it. Never decide anything without stepping back, never speak a word without stepping back, never throw yourself into action without stepping back. All that belongs to the ordinary world is impermanent and fugitive, so there is nothing in it worth getting upset about. What is lasting, eternal, immortal and infinite – that indeed is worth having, worth conquering, worth possessing. It is Divine Light, Divine Love, Divine Life – it is also Supreme Peace, Perfect Joy and All-Mastery upon earth with the Complete Manifestation as the crowning. When you get the sense of the relativity of things,

then whatever happens you can step back and look; you can remain quiet and call on the Divine Force and wait for an answer. Then you will know exactly what to do. Remember, therefore, that you cannot receive the answer before you are very peaceful. Practise that inner peace, make at least a small beginning and go on in your practice until it becomes a habit with you.¹⁵⁷

Becoming Aware of "Oneself"

It's one of the most indispensable things to do if one wants to succeed in having self-control and even a limited self-knowledge: to be able to localise one's consciousness and move it about in the different parts of one's being, in such a way as to distinguish between one's consciousness and one's thought, feelings, impulses, become aware of what the consciousness is in itself. And in this way one can learn how to shift it: one can put one's consciousness in the body, put it in the vital, put it in the psychic (that's the best place to put it in); one can put one's consciousness in the mind, can raise it above the mind, and with one's consciousness one can go into all the regions of the universe.

But first of all one must know what one's consciousness is, that is, become conscious of one's consciousness, localise it. And for this there are many exercises. But one of them is very well known, it is to observe oneself and watch oneself living, and then see whether it is really the body which is the consciousness of the being, what one calls "myself"; and then when one has realised that it is not at all the body, that the body expresses something else, then one searches in his impulses, emotions, to see whether it's

that, and again one finds out that it is not that; and then one seeks in his thoughts, whether the thought is truly himself, what he calls "myself", and at the end of a very short time one becomes aware: "No, I am thinking, therefore 'myself' is different from my thoughts." And so, by progressive eliminations one succeeds in entering into contact with something, something which gives you the impression of being – "Yes, that's 'myself'. And this something I can move around, I can move it from my body to my vital, to my mind, I can even, if I am very... how to put it?... very practised in moving it, I can move it into other people, and it's in this way that I can identify myself with things and people. I can with the help of my aspiration make it come out of my human form, rise above towards regions which are no longer this little body at all and what it contains." And so one begins to understand what one's consciousness is; and it's after that that one can say, "Good, I shall unite my consciousness with my psychic being and shall leave it there, so that it may be in harmony with the Divine and be able to surrender entirely to the Divine." Or else, "If by this exercise of rising above my faculties of thinking and my intellect I can enter a region of pure light, pure knowledge..." then one can put his consciousness there and live like that, in a luminous splendour which is above the physical form.

But first this consciousness must be mobile, and one must know how to distinguish it from the other parts of the being which in fact are its instruments, its modes of expression. The consciousness must make use of these things, and not you mistake these things for the consciousness. You put the consciousness in these things, so you become conscious of your body, conscious of your vital,

conscious of your mind, conscious of all your activities through your will for identification; but for this, first your consciousness must not be completely entangled, mingled, joined, so to say, with all these things, it must not take them for itself, must not be mistaken.

When one thinks of himself (obviously out of millions of men perhaps there are not ten who do otherwise) he thinks "Myself... that's my body, that's what I call 'myself', what's like this. And so, I am like that; and then my neighbour, he also is the body. When I speak of another person, I speak of his body." And so, as long as one is in this state he is the plaything of all possible movements and has no self-control.

The body is the last instrument and yet it's this which one calls "myself" most of the time, unless one has begun to reflect.¹⁵⁸

Self-Observation and Self-Organization

"It is only by observing these movements (of our being) with great care, by bringing them, as it were, before the tribunal of our highest ideal, with a sincere will to submit to its judgment, that we can hope to educate in us a discernment which does not err."

"The Science of Living", *On Education*

One must be clearly aware of the origin of one's movements because there are contradictory velleities in the being – some pushing you here, others pushing you there, and that obviously creates a chaos in life. If you observe

yourself, you will see that as soon as you do something which disturbs you a little, the mind immediately gives you a favourable reason to justify yourself – this mind is capable of gilding everything. In these conditions it is difficult to know oneself. One must be absolutely sincere to be able to do it and to see clearly into all the little falsehoods of the mental being.

If in your mind you go over the various movements and reactions of the day like one repeating indefinitely the same thing, you will not progress. If this reviewing is to make you progress, you must find something within you in whose light you can be yourself your own judge, something which represents for you the best part of yourself, which has some light, some goodwill and which precisely is in love with progress. Place that before you and first pass across it as in a cinema all that you have done, all that you have felt, your impulses, your thoughts, etc.; then try to coordinate them, that is, find out why this has followed that. And look at the luminous screen that is before you: certain things pass by well, without throwing a shadow; others, on the contrary, throw a little shadow; others yet cast a shadow altogether black and disagreeable. You must do this very sincerely, as though you were playing a game: under such circumstances I did such and such a thing, feeling like this and thinking in this way; I have before me my ideal of knowledge and self-mastery, well, was this act in keeping with my ideal or not? If it was, it would not leave any shadow on the screen, which would remain transparent, and one would not have to worry about it. If it is not in conformity, it casts a shadow. Why has it left this shadow? What was there in this act that was contrary to the will to self-knowledge and self-mastery?

Most often you will find that it corresponds to unconsciousness – then you file it among unconscious things and resolve that next time you will try to be conscious before doing anything. But in other cases you will see that it was a nasty little egoism, quite black, which had come to distort your action or your thought. Then you place this egoism before your “light” and ask yourself: “Why has it the right to make me act like that, think like that?...” And instead of accepting any odd explanation you must search and you will find in a corner of your being something which thinks and says, “Ah, no, I shall accept everything but that.” You will see that it is a petty vanity, a movement of self-love, an egoistic feeling hidden somewhere, a hundred things. Then you take a good look at these things in the light of your ideal: “Is cherishing this movement in conformity with my seeking and the realisation of my ideal or not? I put this little dark corner in front of the light until the light enters into it and it disappears.” Then the comedy is over. But the comedy of your whole day is not finished yet, you know, for there are many things which have to pass thus before the light. But if you continue this game – for truly it is a game, if you do this sincerely – I assure you that in six months you will not recognise yourself, you will say to yourself, “What? I was like that! It is impossible!”

You may be five years old or twenty, fifty or sixty and yet transform yourself in this way by putting everything before this inner light. You will see that the elements which do not conform with your ideal are not generally elements which you have to throw wholly out of yourself (there are very few of this kind); they are simply things not in their place. If you organise everything – your

feelings, your thoughts, your impulses, etc. – around the psychic centre which is the inner light, you will see that all inner discord will change into a luminous order.

It is quite evident that if a similar procedure were adopted by a nation or by the earth, most of the things which make men unhappy would disappear, for the major part of the world's misery comes from the fact that things are not in their place. If life were organised in such a way that nothing was wasted and each thing was in its place, most of these miseries would not exist any longer. An old sage has said:

“There is no evil. There is only a lack of balance.

“There is nothing bad. Only things are not in their place.”

If everything were in its place, in nations, in the material world, in the actions and thoughts and feelings of individuals, the greater part of human suffering would disappear.¹⁵⁹

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In oneself, there are contradictory wills.

Yes, many. That is one of the very first discoveries. There is one part which wants things this way; and then at another moment another way, and a third time, one wants still another thing! Besides, there is even this: something that wants and another which says no. So? But it is exactly that which has to be found if you wish in the least to organise yourself. Why not project yourself upon a screen, as in the cinema, and then look at yourself moving on it? How interesting it is!

This is the first step.

You project yourself on the screen and then observe and see all that is moving there and how it moves and what happens. You make a little diagram, it becomes so interesting then. And then, after a while, when you are quite accustomed to seeing you can go one step further and take a decision. Or even a still greater step: you organise – arrange, take up all that, put each thing in its place, organise in such a way that you begin to have a straight movement with an inner meaning. And then you become conscious of your direction and are able to say: "Very well, it will be thus; my life will develop in that way, because that is the logic of my being. Now, I have arranged all that is within me, each thing has been put in its place, and so naturally a central orientation is forming. I am following this orientation. One step more and I know what will happen to me for I myself am deciding it...." I do not know, I am telling you this; to me it seemed terribly interesting, the most interesting thing in the world. There was nothing, no other thing that interested me more than that. . . .

And I am so convinced that anybody who does it in that way, with the same freshness and sincerity, will obtain exhilarating results.... To put all that on a screen in front of yourself and look at what is happening. And the first step is to know all that is happening and then you must not try to shut your eyes when something does not appear pleasant to you! You must keep them wide open and put each thing in that way before the screen. Then you make quite an interesting discovery. And then the next step is to begin saying: "Since all that is happening within me, why should I not put this thing in this way and then that thing

in that way and then this other in this way and thus wouldn't I be doing something logical that has a meaning? Why should I not remove that thing which stands obstructing the way, these conflicting wills? Why? And what does that represent in the being? Why is it there? If it were put there, would it not help instead of harming me?" And so on.

And little by little, little by little, you see clearer and then you see why you are made like that, what is the thing you have got to do – that for which *you are born*. And then, quite naturally, since all is organised for this thing to come, the path becomes straight and you can say beforehand: "It is in this way that it will happen." And when things come from outside to try and upset all that, you are able to say: "No, I accept this, for it helps; I reject that, for that harms." And then, after a few years, you curb yourself as you curb a horse: you do whatever you like, in the way you like and you go wherever you like.

It seems to me this is worth the trouble. I believe it is the most interesting thing.¹⁶⁰

Visualization for Discovering One's Being

As when one goes on the discovery of one's inner being, of all the different parts of one's being, one very often has the feeling that one is entering deep into a hall or room, and according to the colour, the atmosphere, the things it contains, one has a very clear perception of the part of the being one is visiting. And then, one can go from one room to another, open doors and go into deeper and deeper rooms each of which has its own character. And often,

these inner visits can be made during the night. Then it takes a still more concrete form, like a dream, and one feels that he is entering a house, and that this house is very familiar to him. And according to the time, the periods, it is internally different, and sometimes it may be in a state of very great disorder, very great confusion, where everything is mixed up; sometimes there are even broken things; it is quite a chaos. At other times these things are organised, put in their place; it is as though one had arranged the household, one cleans up, puts it in order, and it is always the same house. This house is the image, a kind of objective image, of your inner being. And in accordance with what you see there or do there, you have a symbolic representation of your psychological work. It is very useful for concretising. It depends on people.

Some people are just intellectuals; for them everything is expressed by ideas and not by images. But if they were to go down into a more material domain, well, they risk not touching things in their concrete reality and remaining only in the domain of ideas, remaining in the mind and remaining there indefinitely. Then one thinks one is making progress, and mentally one has done so, though it is something altogether indefinite.

The mind's progress may take thousands of years, for it is a very vast and very indefinite field, which is constantly renewed. But if one wants to progress in the vital and physical, well, this imaged representation becomes very useful for fixing the action, making it more concrete. Naturally it doesn't happen completely at will; it depends on each one's nature. But those who have the power of concentrating with images, well, they have one more facility.

To sit in meditation before a closed door, as though it were a heavy door of bronze – and one sits in front of it with the will that it may open – and to pass to the other side; and so the whole concentration, the whole aspiration is gathered into a beam and pushes, pushes, pushes against this door, and pushes more and more with an increasing energy until all of a sudden it bursts open, and one enters. It makes a very powerful impression. And so one is as though plunged into the light and then one has the full enjoyment of a sudden and radical change of consciousness, with an illumination that captures one entirely, and the feeling that one is becoming another person. And this is a very concrete and very powerful way of entering into contact with one's psychic being.¹⁶¹

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... when I ask you to go deep down within yourselves, some of you will concentrate on a sensation, but others may just as well have the impression of going down into a deep well, and they clearly see the picture of steps going down into a dark and deep well, and they go down farther and farther, deeper and deeper, and sometimes reach precisely a door; they sit down before the door with the will to enter, and sometimes the door opens, and then they go in and see a kind of hall or a room or a cave or something, and from there, if they go on they may come to another door and again stop, and with an effort the door opens and they go farther. And if this is done with enough persistence and one can continue the experience, there comes a time when one finds oneself in front of a door which has... a special kind of solidity or solemnity,

and with a great effort of concentration the door opens and one suddenly enters a hall of clarity, of light; and then, one has the experience, you see, of contact with one's soul....¹⁶²

Awakening the Inner Consciousness

You have asked what is the discipline to be followed in order to convert the mental seeking into a living spiritual experience. The first necessity is the practice of concentration of your consciousness within yourself. The ordinary human mind has an activity on the surface which veils the real Self. But there is another, a hidden consciousness within behind the surface one in which we can become aware of the real Self and of a larger deeper truth of nature, can realise the Self and liberate and transform the nature. To quiet the surface mind and begin to live within is the object of this concentration. Of this true consciousness other than the superficial there are two main centres, one in the heart (not the physical heart, but the cardiac centre in the middle of the chest), one in the head. The concentration in the heart opens within and by following this inward opening and going deep one becomes aware of the soul or psychic being, the divine element in the individual. This being unveiled begins to come forward, to govern the nature, to turn it and all its movements towards the Truth, towards the Divine, and to call down into it all that is above. It brings the consciousness of the Presence, the dedication of the being to the Highest and invites the descent into our nature of a greater Force and

Consciousness which is waiting above us. To concentrate in the heart centre with the offering of oneself to the Divine and the aspiration for this inward opening and for the Presence in the heart is the first way and, if it can be done, the natural beginning; for its result once obtained makes the spiritual path far more easy and safe than if one begins the other way.

That other way is the concentration in the head, in the mental centre. This, if it brings about the silence of the surface mind, opens up an inner, larger, deeper mind within which is more capable of receiving spiritual experience and spiritual knowledge. But once concentrated here one must open the silent mental consciousness upward to all that is above mind. After a time one feels the consciousness rising upward and in the end it rises beyond the lid which has so long kept it tied in the body and finds a centre above the head where it is liberated into the Infinite. There it begins to come into contact with the universal Self, the Divine Peace, Light, Power, Knowledge, Bliss, to enter into that and become that, to feel the descent of these things into the nature. To concentrate in the head with the aspiration for quietude in the mind and the realisation of the Self and Divine above is the second way of concentration. It is important, however, to remember that the concentration of the consciousness in the head is only a preparation for its rising to the centre above; otherwise, one may get shut up in one's own mind and its experiences or at best attain only to a reflection of the Truth above instead of rising into the spiritual transcendence to live there. For some the mental concentration is easier, for some the concentration in the heart centre;

some are capable of doing both alternately – but to begin with the heart centre, if one can do it, is the more desirable.

The other side of discipline is with regard to the activities of the nature, of the mind, of the life-self or vital, of the physical being. Here the principle is to accord the nature with the inner realisation so that one may not be divided into two discordant parts. There are here several disciplines or processes possible. One is to offer all the activities to the Divine and call for the inner guidance and the taking up of one's nature by a Higher Power. If there is the inward soul-opening, if the psychic being comes forward, then there is no great difficulty – there comes with it a psychic discrimination, a constant intimation, finally a governance which discloses and quietly and patiently removes all imperfections, brings the right mental and vital movements and reshapes the physical consciousness also. Another method is to stand back detached from the movements of the mind, life, physical being, to regard their activities as only a habitual formation of general Nature in the individual imposed on us by past workings, not as any part of our real being; in proportion as one succeeds in this, becomes detached, sees mind and its activities as not oneself, life and its activities as not oneself, the body and its activities as not oneself, one becomes aware of an inner Being within us – inner mental, inner vital, inner physical – silent, calm, unbound, unattached which reflects the true Self above and can be its direct representative; from this inner silent Being proceeds a rejection of all that is to be rejected, an acceptance only of what can be kept and transformed, an inmost Will to perfection or a call to the Divine Power to do at

each step what is necessary for the change of the Nature. It can also open mind, life and body to the inmost psychic entity and its guiding influence or its direct guidance. In most cases these two methods emerge and work together and finally fuse into one. But one can begin with either, the one that one feels most natural and easy to follow.

Finally, in all difficulties where personal effort is hampered, the help of the Teacher can intervene and bring about what is needed for the realisation or for the immediate step that is necessary.¹⁶³

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We read, we try to understand, we explain, we try to know. But a single minute of true experience teaches us more than millions of words and hundreds of explanations.

So the first question is: "How to have the experience?"

To go within yourself, that is the first step.

And then, once you have succeeded in going within yourself deeply enough to feel the reality of that which is within, to widen yourself progressively, systematically, to become as vast as the universe and lose the sense of limitation.

These are the first two preparatory movements.

And these two things must be done in the greatest possible calm, peace and tranquillity. This peace, this tranquillity brings about silence in the mind and stillness in the vital.

This effort, this attempt must be renewed very regularly, persistently. And after a certain lapse of time, which may be longer or shorter, you begin to perceive a reality

that is different from the reality perceived in the ordinary, external consciousness.

Naturally, by the action of Grace, the veil may suddenly be rent from within, and at once you can enter the true truth; but even when that happens, in order to obtain the full value and full effect of the experience, you must maintain yourself in a state of inner receptivity, and to do that, it is indispensable for you to go within each day.¹⁶⁴

Exercising Static Power

Well, there is a static power. How to explain it to you? Look, there is the same difference between static power and dynamic power as between a game of defence and a game of attack; you understand? It is the same thing. Static power is something which can withstand everything, nothing can act upon it, nothing can touch it, nothing can shake it – it is immobile, but it is invincible. Dynamic power is something in action, which at times goes forth and may at times receive blows. That is to say, if you want your dynamic power to be always victorious, it must be supported by a considerable static power, an unshakable base.

I know what you want to say... that a human being becomes aware of power only when it is dynamic; a human being doesn't consider it a power except when it acts; if it doesn't act he does not even notice it, he does not realise the tremendous force which is behind this inaction – at times, even frequently, a force more formidable than the power which acts. But you may try it out in yourself, you will see, it is much more difficult to remain

calm, immobile, unshakable before something very unpleasant – whether it be words or acts levelled against you – infinitely more difficult than to answer with the same violence. Suppose someone insults you; if in the face of these insults you can remain immobile (not only outwardly, I mean integrally), without being shaken or touched in any way: you are there like a force against which one can do nothing and you do not reply, you do not make a gesture, you do not say a word, all the insults thrown at you leave you absolutely untouched, within and without; you can keep your heart-beats absolutely quiet, you can keep the thoughts in your head quite immobile and calm without their being in the least disturbed, that is, your head does not answer immediately by similar vibrations and your nerves don't feel clenched with the need to return a few blows to relieve themselves; if you can be like that, you have a static power, and it is infinitely more powerful than if you had that kind of force which makes you answer insult by insult, blow by blow and agitation by agitation.¹⁶⁵

Becoming Aware of the Shadow

If you look at yourself carefully, you will see that one always carries in oneself the opposite of the virtue one has to realise (I use "virtue" in its widest and highest sense). You have a special aim, a special mission, a special realisation which is your very own, each one individually, and you carry in yourself all the obstacles necessary to make your realisation perfect. Always you will see that within you the shadow and the light are equal: you have

an ability, you have also the negation of this ability. But if you discover a very black hole, a thick shadow, be sure there is somewhere in you a great light. It is up to you to know how to use the one to realise the other.

This is a fact very little spoken about, but one of capital importance. And if you observe carefully you will see that it is always thus with everyone. This leads us to statements which are paradoxical but absolutely true; for instance, that the greatest thief can be the most honest man (this is not to encourage you to steal, of course!) and the greatest liar can be the most truthful person. So, do not despair if you find in yourself the greatest weakness, for perhaps it is the sign of the greatest divine strength. Do not say, "I am like that, I can't be otherwise." It is not true. You are "like that" because, precisely, you ought to be the opposite. And all your difficulties are there just that you may learn to transform them into the truth they are hiding.

Once you have understood this, many worries come to an end and you are very happy, very happy. If one finds one has very black holes, one says, "This shows I can rise very high", if the abyss is very deep, "I can climb very high." It is the same from the universal point of view; to use the Hindu terminology so familiar to you, it is the greatest Asuras who are the greatest beings of Light. And the day these Asuras are converted, they will be the supreme beings of the creation. This is not to encourage you to be asuric, you know, but it is like that – this will widen your minds a little and help you to free yourself from those ideas of opposing good and evil, for if you abide in that category, there is no hope.¹⁶⁶

One can see, when one studies oneself very attentively.... For example, if you observe yourself, you see that one day you are very generous . . . generous in your feelings, generous in your sensations, generous in your thoughts and even in material things; that is, you understand the faults of others, their intentions, weaknesses, even nasty movements. You see all this, and you are full of good feelings, of generosity. You tell yourself, "Well... everyone does the best he can!" – like that.

Another day – or perhaps the very next minute – you will notice in yourself a kind of dryness, fixity, something that is bitter, that judges severely, that goes as far as bearing a grudge, has rancour, would like the evil-doer punished, that almost has feelings of vengeance; just the very opposite of the former! One day someone harms you and you say, "Doesn't matter! He did not know"... or "He couldn't do otherwise"... or "That's his nature"... or "He could not understand!" The next day – or perhaps an hour later – you say, "He must be punished! He must pay for it! He must be made to feel that he has done wrong!" – with a kind of rage; and you want to take things, you want to keep them for yourself, you have all the feelings of jealousy, envy, narrowness, you see, just the very opposite of the other feeling.

This is the dark side. And so, the moment one sees it, if one looks at it and doesn't say, "It is I", if one says, "No, it is my shadow, it is the being I must throw out of myself", one puts on it the light of the other part, one tries to bring them face to face; and with the knowledge and light of the other, one doesn't try so much to convince – because that is very difficult – but one compels it to remain quiet... first to stand farther away, then one flings

it very far away so that it can no longer return – putting a great light on it. There are instances in which it is possible to change, but this is very rare. There are instances in which one can put upon this being – or this shadow – put upon it such an intense light that it transforms it, and it changes into what is the truth of your being.

But this is a rare thing.... It can be done, but it is rare. Usually, the best thing is to say, “No, this is not I! I don’t want it! I have nothing to do with this movement, it doesn’t exist for me, it is something contrary to my nature!” And so, by dint of insisting and driving it away, finally one separates oneself from it.

But one must first be clear and sincere enough to see the conflict within oneself. Usually one doesn’t pay any attention to these things. One goes from one extreme to the other. You see, you can say, to put it in very simple words: one day I am good, the next day I am bad. And this seems quite natural.... Or even, sometimes for one hour you are good and the next hour you are wicked; or else, sometimes the whole day through one is good and suddenly one becomes wicked, for a minute very wicked, all the more wicked as one was good! Only, one doesn’t observe it, thoughts cross one’s mind, violent, bad, hateful things, like that... Usually one pays no attention to it. But this is what must be caught! As soon as it manifests, you must catch it like this (*Mother makes a movement*) with a very firm grip, and then hold it, hold it up to the light and say, “No! I don’t want you! I – don’t – want – you! I have nothing to do with this! You are going to get out of here, and you won’t return!”

(*After a silence*) And this is something – an experience that one can have daily, or almost... when one has those

movements of great enthusiasm, great aspiration, when one suddenly becomes conscious of the divine goal, the urge towards the Divine, the desire to take part in the divine work, when one comes out of oneself in a great joy and great force... and then, a few hours later, one is miserable for a tiny little thing; one indulges in so petty, so narrow, so commonplace a self-interestedness, has such a dull desire... and all the rest has evaporated as if it did not exist. One is quite accustomed to contradictions; one doesn't pay attention to this and that is why all these things live comfortably together as neighbours. One must first discover them and prevent them from intermingling in one's consciousness: decide between them, separate the shadow from the light. Later one can get rid of the shadow.¹⁶⁷

Mastery Through Attitude

... for each one it is the best and most favourable conditions which are given. We were saying the other day that it is only his friends whom God treats with severity; you thought it was a joke, but it is true. It is only to those who are full of hope, who will pass through this purifying flame, that the conditions for attaining the maximum result are given. And the human mind is made in such a way that you may test this; when something extremely unpleasant happens to you, you may tell yourself, "Well, this proves I am worth the trouble of being given this difficulty, this proves there is something in me which can resist the difficulty", and you will notice that instead of tormenting yourself, you rejoice – you will be so happy

and so strong that even the most unpleasant things will seem to you quite charming! This is a very easy experiment to make. Whatever the circumstance, if your mind is accustomed to look at it as something favourable it will no longer be unpleasant for you. This is quite well known; as long as the mind refuses to accept a thing, struggles against it, tries to obstruct it, there are torments, difficulties, storms, inner struggles and all suffering. But the minute the mind says, "Good, this is what has to come, it is thus that it must happen", whatever happens, you are content. There are people who have acquired such control of their mind over their body that they feel nothing; I told you this the other day about certain mystics: if they think the suffering inflicted upon them is going to help them cross the stages in a moment and give them a sort of stepping-stone to attain the Realisation, the goal they have put before them, union with the Divine, they no longer feel the suffering at all. Their body is as it were galvanised by the mental conception. This has happened very often, it is a very common experience among those who truly have enthusiasm.¹⁶⁸

Identification

You have never tried to enter another person's consciousness to know exactly what is going on there? Not projecting your consciousness into someone else, because then you find yourself inside him and this is not interesting – but entering into relation with his consciousness which is within him, for example when, for one reason or another, you don't see things eye to eye; one sees them in one way,

the other in another. If people are reasonable they do not quarrel. But if they are not reasonable, they begin quarrelling. Then, instead of quarrelling, the best thing to do is to enter into the other's consciousness and ask yourself why he says things like that, what is it that pushes him to do this or say that? What is the inner reason, what is his vision of things which makes him take this attitude? It is extremely interesting. If you do this, immediately you stop being angry. First thing: you can no longer be angry. So this is already a great gain. But also, if the other continues being angry, it has no effect on you.

And then, later, one can try to identify oneself more perfectly and prevent the movements of division and deformation and stop quarrels. Very useful.¹⁶⁹

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One can learn how to identify oneself. One must learn. It is indispensable if one wants to get out of one's ego. For so long as one is shut up in one's ego, one can't make any progress.

How can it be done?

There are many processes. I'll tell you one.

When I was in Paris, I used to go to many places where there were gatherings of all kinds, people making all sorts of researches, spiritual (so-called spiritual), occult researches, etc. And once I was invited to meet a young lady (I believe she was Swedish) who had found a process of knowledge, exactly a process for learning. And so she explained it to us: . . . "It's like this, you take an object

or make a sign on a blackboard or take a drawing – that is not important – take whatever is most convenient for you. Suppose, for instance, that I draw for you... (she had a blackboard) I draw a design." She drew a kind of half-geometric design. "Now, you sit in front of the design and concentrate all your attention upon it – upon that design which is there. You concentrate, concentrate without letting anything else enter your consciousness – except that. Your eyes are fixed on the drawing and don't move at all. You are as it were hypnotised by the drawing. You look (and so she sat there, looking), you look, look, look.... I don't know, it takes more or less time, but still for one who is used to it, it goes pretty fast. You look, look, look, you *become* that drawing you are looking at. Nothing else exists in the world any longer except the drawing, and then, suddenly, you pass to the other side; and when you pass to the other side you enter a new consciousness, and you know."

We had a good laugh, for it was amusing. But it is quite true, it is an excellent method to practise. Naturally, instead of taking a drawing or any object, you may take, for instance, an idea, a few words. You have a problem preoccupying you, you don't know the solution of the problem; well, you objectify your problem in your mind, put it in the most precise, exact, succinct terms possible, and then concentrate, make an effort; you concentrate only on the words, and if possible on the idea they represent, that is, upon your problem – you concentrate, concentrate, concentrate until nothing else exists but that. And it is true that, all of a sudden, you have the feeling of something opening, and one is on the other side. The other side of what?... It means that you have opened a

door of your consciousness, and instantaneously you have the solution of your problem.

It is an excellent method of learning "how" to identify oneself.

For instance, you are with someone. This person tells you something, you tell him the contrary (as it usually happens, simply through a spirit of contradiction) and you begin arguing. Naturally, you will never come to any point, except a quarrel if you are ill-natured. But instead of doing that, instead of remaining in your own ideas or your own words, if you tell yourself: "Wait a little, I am going to try and see why he said that to me. Yes, why did he tell me that?" And you concentrate: "Why, why, why?" You stand there, just like that, trying. The other person continues speaking, doesn't he? — and is very happy too, for you don't contradict him any longer! He talks profusely and is sure he has convinced you. Then you concentrate more and more on what he is saying, and with the feeling that gradually, through his words, you are entering his mind. When you enter his head, suddenly you enter into his way of thinking, and next, just imagine, you understand why he is speaking to you thus! And then, if you have a fairly swift intelligence and put what you have just come to understand alongside what you had known before, you have the two ways together, and so can find the truth reconciling both. And here you have truly made progress. And this is the best way of widening one's thought.

If you are beginning an argument, keep quiet immediately, instantaneously. You must be silent, say nothing at all and then try to see the thing as the other person sees it — that won't make you forget your own way of

seeing it, not at all! but you will be able to put both of them together. And you will truly have made progress, a real progress.

It is the same for everything. In all that you do together with others, if you do not agree, take it as a divine Grace, a marvellous opportunity given you to make a progress. And it is simple: instead of being on this side, you are on the other; instead of looking at yourself, you enter the other person and look. You must have just a little bit of imagination, a little more control over your thoughts, over your movements. But that is not very difficult. When you have tried it out a little, after a while you find it very easy.

You must not just look and then make a mental effort, telling yourself: "Why is it like this and like that? Why does he do that? Why does he say that?" You will never arrive at anything. You won't understand, you will imagine all kinds of explanations which will be worthless and teach you nothing at all except to tell yourself: "That person is stupid or else wicked" – things that lead nowhere. On the other hand, if you only make that little movement, and instead of looking at him as an object quite alien to you, you try to enter within, you enter within, into that little head that's before you, and then, suddenly, you find yourself on the other side, you look at yourself and understand quite well what he is saying – everything is clear, the why, the how, the reason, the feeling which is behind the whole thing.... It is an experiment you have the opportunity of making a hundred times a day.

At first you won't succeed very well, but if you persist, you will end up by succeeding admirably. This adds a lot of interest to life. And besides it is a work which really

makes you progress, for it makes you come out of that little armour of yours in which you are nicely shut up, in which you knock against everything. You have seen moths knocking against the light, haven't you?... Everyone's consciousness is like that, it goes along knocking here, knocking there, for these are things foreign to it. But instead of knocking about, one enters within, then it begins to become a part of oneself. One widens oneself, breathes freely, has enough space to move in, one doesn't knock against anything, one enters, penetrates, understands. And one lives in many places at the same time. It is very interesting, one does it automatically.

For instance, when you are reading a book that interests you very much, a wonderful novel full of exciting adventures, when you are completely absorbed in the story, at times you forget your class-hour or even dinner-time or your bed-time. You are completely absorbed in what you are reading. Well, this is a phenomenon of self-identification. And if you do it with a certain perfection, you succeed in understanding ahead what is going to happen. There is a moment when, being fully absorbed in the story, you come to know (without trying to look for it) towards what end the author is leading you, how he is going to unfold his story and come to his conclusion. For you have identified yourself with the creative thought of the author. You do it more or less perfectly, without knowing that you are doing it, but these are phenomena of self-identification.¹⁷⁰

Widening the Consciousness

One must, if one can, widen one's consciousness.

I knew somebody who wanted to widen his consciousness; he said he had found a way, it was to lie flat on his back at night, out-of-doors, and look at the stars and try to identify himself with them, and go away deep into an immense world, and so lose completely all sense of proportion, of the order of the earth and all its little things, and become vast as the sky... you couldn't say as vast as the universe, for we see only a tiny bit of it, but vast as the sky with all the stars. And so, you know, the little impurities fall off for the time being and one understands things on a very vast scale. It is a good exercise.¹⁷¹

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The method of relaxing the contraction may be different in the mind, the vital or the body, but logically it is the same thing. Once you have relaxed the tension, you see first if the disagreeable effect ceases, . . . but if the pain continues . . . you must, after having relaxed this contraction, begin trying to widen yourself – you feel you are widening yourself. There are many methods. Some find it very useful to imagine they are floating on water with a plank under their back. Then they widen themselves, widen, until they become the vast liquid mass. Others make an effort to identify themselves with the sky and the stars, so they widen, widen themselves, identifying themselves more and more with the sky. Others again don't need these pictures; they can become conscious of their consciousness, enlarge their consciousness more and more

until it becomes unlimited. One can enlarge it till it becomes vast as the earth and even the universe. When one does that one becomes really receptive. As I have said, it is a question of training. In any case, from an immediate point of view, . . . the method is just the same, you must act upon the contraction. One can act through thought, by calling the peace, tranquillity (the feeling of peace takes away much of the difficulty) like this: "Peace, peace, peace... tranquillity... calm." Many discomforts, even physical, like all these contractions of the solar plexus, which are so unpleasant and give you at times nausea, the sensation of being suffocated, of not being able to breathe again, can disappear thus. It is the nervous centre which is affected, it gets affected very easily. As soon as there is something which affects the solar plexus, you must say, "Calm... calm... calm", become more and more calm until the tension is destroyed.

In thought also. For instance, you are reading something and come across a thought you don't understand – it is beyond you, you understand nothing and so in your head it lies like a brick, and if you try to understand, it becomes more and more like a brick, a stiffening, and if you persist it gives you a headache. There is but one thing to do: not to struggle with the words, remain just like this (*gesture: stretched out, immobile*), create a relaxation, simply widen, widen. And don't try to understand, above all, don't try to understand – let it enter like that, quite gently, and relax, relax, and in this relaxing your headache goes away. You no longer think of anything, you wait for a few days and after some days you see from inside: "Oh! how clear it is! I understand what I had not understood." It is as easy as that. When you read a book

which is beyond you, when you come across sentences which you cannot understand – one feels that there is no correspondence in the head – well, you must do this; one reads the thing once, twice, thrice, then remains calm and makes the mind silent. A fortnight later, one takes up the same passage again and it is clear as daylight. Everything has been organised in the head, the elements of the brain which were wanted for the understanding have been formed, everything has been done gradually and one understands.¹⁷²

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. . . there are many ways of doing this [making the consciousness vast].

The easiest way is to identify yourself with something vast. For instance, when you feel that you are shut up in a completely narrow and limited thought, will, consciousness, when you feel as though you were in a shell, then if you begin thinking about something very vast, as for example, the immensity of the waters of an ocean, and if really you can think of this ocean and how it stretches out far, far, far, far, in all directions, like this (*Mother stretches out her arms*), how, compared with you, it is so far, so far that you cannot see the other shore, you cannot reach its end anywhere, neither behind or in front nor to the right or left... it is wide, wide, wide, wide... you think of this and then you feel that you are floating on this sea, like that, and that there are *no* limits.... This is very easy. Then you can widen your consciousness a little.

Other people, for example, begin looking at the sky; and then they imaginé all those spaces between all those

stars, and all... that kind of infinity of spaces in which the earth is a tiny point, and you too are just a very tiny point, smaller than an ant, on the earth. And so you look at the sky and feel that you are floating in these infinite spaces between the planets, and that you are growing vaster and vaster to go farther and farther. Some people succeed with this.

There is a way also by trying to identify yourself with all things upon earth. For example, when you have a small narrow vision of something and are hurt by others' vision and point of view, you must begin by shifting your consciousness, try to put it in others, and try gradually to identify yourself with all the different ways of thinking of all others. This is a little more – how shall I put it?... dangerous. Because to identify oneself with the thought and will of others means to identify oneself with a heap of stupidities (*Mother laughs*) and bad wills, and this may bring consequences which are not very good. But still, some people do this more easily. For instance, when they are in disagreement with someone, in order to widen their consciousness they try to put themselves in the place of the other and see the thing not from their own point of view but from the point of view of the other. This widens the consciousness, though not as much as by the first ways I spoke about, which are quite innocent. They don't do you any harm, they do you much good. They make you very peaceful.

There are lots of intellectual ways of widening the consciousness. These I have explained fully in my book. But in any case, when you are bored by something, when something is painful to you or very unpleasant, if you begin to think of the eternity of time and the immensity of

space, if you think of all that has gone before and all that will come afterwards, and that this second in eternity is truly just a passing breath, and that it seems so utterly ridiculous to be upset by something which in the eternity of time is... one doesn't even have the time to become aware of it, it has no place, no importance, because, what indeed is a second in eternity? If one can manage to realise that, to... how to put it?... visualise, picture the little person one is, in the little earth where one is, and the tiny second of consciousness which for the moment is hurting you or is unpleasant for you, just this – which in itself is only a second in your existence, and that you yourself have been many things before and will be many more things afterwards, that what affects you now you will have probably completely forgotten in ten years, or if you remember it you will say, "How did I happen to attach any importance to that?"... if you can realise that first and then realise your little person which is a second in eternity, not even a second, you know, imperceptible, a fragment of a second in eternity, that the whole world has unrolled before this and will unroll yet, indefinitely – before, behind – and that... well, then suddenly you sense the utter ridiculousness of the importance you attach to what happened to you.... *Truly* you feel... to what an extent it is absurd to attach any importance to one's life, to oneself, and to what happens to you. And in the space of three minutes, if you do this properly, all unpleasantness is swept away. Even a very deep pain can be swept away. Simply a concentration like this, and to place oneself in infinity and eternity. Everything goes away. One comes out of it cleansed. One can get rid of *all* attachments and even, I say, of the deepest sorrows – of every-

thing, in this way – if one knows how to do it in the right way. It immediately takes you out of your little ego.¹⁷³

Dynamic Meditation

It is very difficult to meditate. There are all kinds of meditations.... You may take an idea and follow it to arrive at a given result – this is an active meditation; people who want to solve a problem or to write, meditate in this way without knowing that they are meditating. Others sit down and try to concentrate on something without following an idea – simply to concentrate on a point in order to intensify one's power of concentration; and this brings about what usually happens when you concentrate upon a point: if you succeed in gathering your capacity for concentration sufficiently upon a point whether mental, vital or physical, at a given moment you pass through and enter into another consciousness. Others still try to drive out from their head all movements, ideas, reflexes, reactions and to arrive at a truly silent tranquillity. This is extremely difficult; there are people who have tried for twenty-five years and not succeeded, for it is somewhat like taking a bull by the horns.

There is another kind of meditation which consists in being as quiet as one can be but without trying to stop all thoughts, for there are thoughts which are purely mechanical and if you try to stop these you will need years, and into the bargain you will not be sure of the result; instead of that you gather together all your consciousness and remain as quiet and peaceful as possible, you detach yourself from external things as though they do not interest

you at all, and all of a sudden, you brighten the flame of aspiration and throw into it everything that comes to you so that the flame may rise higher and higher, higher and higher; you identify yourself with it and you go up to the extreme point of your consciousness and aspiration, thinking of nothing else – simply, an aspiration which mounts, mounts, mounts, without thinking a minute of the result, of what may happen and specially of what may not, and above all without desiring that something may come – simply, the joy of an aspiration which mounts and mounts and mounts, intensifying itself more and more in a constant concentration. And there I may assure you that what happens is the best that can happen. That is, it is the maximum of your possibilities which is realised when you do this. These possibilities may be very different according to individuals. But then all these worries about trying to be silent, going behind appearances, calling a force which answers, waiting for an answer to your questions, all that vanishes like an unreal vapour. And if you succeed in living consciously in this flame, in this column of mounting aspiration, you will see that even if you do not have an immediate result, after a time something will happen.¹⁷⁴

Drawing upon Helpful Sources

If there are always forces around which are concerned to depress and discourage, there are always forces above and around us which we can draw upon, – draw into ourselves to restore, to fill up again with strength and faith and joy and the power that perseveres and conquers. It is really a

habit that one has to get of opening to these helpful forces and either passively receiving them or actively drawing upon them – for one can do either. It is easier if you have the conception of them above and around you and the faith and the will to receive them – for that brings the experience and concrete sense of them and the capacity to receive at need or at will. It is a question of habituating your consciousness to get into touch and keep in touch with these helpful forces – and for that you must accustom yourself to reject the impressions forced on you by the others, depression, self-distrust, repining and all similar disturbances.¹⁷⁵

Self-Recollection – Remembering

How often there is a kind of emptiness in the course of life, an unoccupied moment, a few minutes, sometimes more. And what do you do? Immediately you try to distract yourself, and you invent some foolishness or other to pass your time. That is a common fact. All men, from the youngest to the oldest, spend most of their time in trying not to be bored. Their pet aversion is boredom and the way to escape from boredom is to act foolishly.

Well, there is a better way than that – to remember.

When you have a little time, whether it is one hour or a few minutes, tell yourself, “At last, I have some time to concentrate, to collect myself, to relive the purpose of my life, to offer myself to the True and the Eternal.” If you took care to do this each time you are not harassed by outer circumstances, you would find out that you were advancing very quickly on the path. Instead of wasting

your time in chattering, in doing useless things, reading things that lower the consciousness – to choose only the best cases, I am not speaking of other imbecilities which are much more serious – instead of trying to make yourself giddy, to make time, that is already so short, still shorter only to realise at the end of your life that you have lost three-quarters of your chance – then you want to put in double time, but that does not work – it is better to be moderate, balanced, patient, quiet, but never to lose an opportunity that is given to you, that is to say, to utilise for the true purpose the unoccupied moment before you.

When you have nothing to do, you become restless, you run about, you meet friends, you take a walk, to speak only of the best; I am not referring to things that are obviously not to be done. Instead of that, sit down quietly before the sky, before the sea or under trees, whatever is possible (here you have all of them) and try to realise one of these things – to understand why you live, to learn how you must live, to ponder over what you want to do and what should be done, what is the best way of escaping from the ignorance and falsehood and pain in which you live.¹⁷⁶

Using Life as a Mirror

It is rather remarkable that when we have a weakness – for example a ridiculous habit, a defect or an imperfection – since it is more or less part of our nature, we consider it to be very natural, it does not shock us. But as soon as we see this same weakness, this same imperfection, this same ridiculous habit in someone else, it seems quite shocking

to us and we say, "What! He's like that?" – without noticing that we ourselves are "like that". And so to the weakness and imperfection we add the absurdity of not even noticing them.

There is a lesson to be drawn from this. When something in a person seems to you completely unacceptable or ridiculous – "What! He is like that, he behaves like that, he says things like that, he does things like that" – you should say to yourself, "Well, well, but perhaps I do the same thing without being aware of it. I would do better to look into myself first before criticising him, so as to make sure that I am not doing the very same thing in a slightly different way." If you have the good sense and intelligence to do this each time you are shocked by another person's behaviour, you will realise that in life your relations with others are like a mirror which is presented to you so that you can see more easily and clearly the weaknesses you carry within you.

In a general and almost absolute way anything that shocks you in other people is the very thing you carry in yourself in a more or less veiled, more or less hidden form, though perhaps in a slightly different guise which allows you to delude yourself. And what in yourself seems inoffensive enough, becomes monstrous as soon as you see it in others.

Try to experience this; it will greatly help you to change yourselves. At the same time it will bring a sunny tolerance to your relationships with others, the goodwill which comes from understanding, and it will very often put an end to these completely useless quarrels.

One can live without quarrelling. It seems strange to say

this because as things are, it would seem, on the contrary, that life is made for quarrelling in the sense that the main occupation of people who are together is to quarrel, overtly or covertly. You do not always come to words, you do not always come to blows – fortunately – but you are in a state of perpetual irritation within because you do not find around you the perfection that you would yourself wish to realise, and which you find rather difficult to realise – but you find it entirely natural that others should realise it.

“How can they be like that?...” You forget how difficult you find it in yourself not to be “like that”!

Try, you will see.

Look upon everything with a benevolent smile. Take all the things which irritate you as a lesson for yourself and your life will be more peaceful and more effective as well, for a great percentage of your energy certainly goes to waste in the irritation you feel when you do not find in others the perfection that you would like to realise in yourself.

You stop short at the perfection that others should realise and you are seldom conscious of the goal you should be pursuing yourself. If you are conscious of it, well then, begin with the work which is given to *you*, that is to say, realise what you have to do and do not concern yourself with what others do, because, after all, it is not your business. And the best way to the true attitude is simply to say, “All those around me, all the circumstances of my life, all the people near me, are a mirror held up to me by the Divine Consciousness to show me the progress I must make. Everything that shocks me in others means a work I have to do in myself.”

And perhaps if one carried true perfection in oneself, one would discover it more often in others.¹⁷⁷

Establishing Peace in the Mind

How can we establish a settled peace and silence in the mind?

First of all, you must want it.

And then you must try and must persevere, continue trying. What I have just told you is a very good means. Yet there are others also. You sit quietly, to begin with; and then, instead of thinking of fifty things, you begin saying to yourself, "Peace, peace, peace, peace, peace, calm, peace!" You imagine peace and calm. You aspire, ask that it may come: "Peace, peace, calm." And then, when something comes and touches you and acts, say quietly, like this, "Peace, peace, peace." Do not look at the thoughts, do not listen to the thoughts, you understand. You must not pay attention to everything that comes. You know, when someone bothers you a great deal and you want to get rid of him, you don't listen to him, do you? Good! You turn your head away (*gesture*) and think of something else. Well, you must do that: when thoughts come, you must not look at them, must not listen to them, must not pay any attention at all, you must behave as though they did not exist, you see! And then, repeat all the time like a kind of – how shall I put it? – as an idiot does, who repeats the same thing always. Well, you must do the same thing; you must repeat, "Peace,

peace, peace." So you try this for a few minutes and then do what you have to do; and then, another time, you begin again; sit down again and then try. Do this on getting up in the morning, do this in the evening when going to bed. You can do this... look, if you want to digest your food properly, you can do this for a few minutes before eating. You can't imagine how much this helps your digestion! Before beginning to eat you sit quietly for a while and say, "Peace, peace, peace!" and *everything* becomes calm. It seems as though all the noises were going far, far, far away (*Mother stretches out her arms on both sides*) and then you must continue; and there comes a time when you no longer need to sit down, and no matter what you are doing, no matter what you are saying, it is always "Peace, peace, peace." Everything remains here, like this, it does not enter (*gesture in front of the forehead*), it remains like this. And then one is always in a perfect peace... after some years.

But at the beginning, a very small beginning, two or three minutes, it is very simple. For something complicated you must make an effort, and when one makes an effort, one is not quiet. It is difficult to make an effort while remaining quiet. Very simple, very simple, you must be very simple in these things. It is as though you were learning how to call a friend: by dint of being called he comes. Well, make peace and calm your friends and call them: "Come, peace, peace, peace, peace, come!"¹⁷⁸

Glossary, References and Index

The first of these is the fact that the
the second is the fact that the
the third is the fact that the
the fourth is the fact that the
the fifth is the fact that the
the sixth is the fact that the
the seventh is the fact that the
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General References and Index

The first of these is the fact that the
the second is the fact that the
the third is the fact that the
the fourth is the fact that the
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the sixth is the fact that the
the seventh is the fact that the
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GLOSSARY

anumantā — giver of the sanction.

abhyāsa — constant practice (of a method).

artha — [one of the four human interests]: interest; material, economic and other aims and needs of the mind and body.

Asura — the Titan; a hostile being.

buddhi (Buddhi) — intelligence-will.

Dhammapada — a Buddhist scripture, containing teachings of the Buddha.

dharma (Dharma) — Law; Law of being; [one of the four human interests]: ethical conduct and the right law of individual and social life.

Hathayogin — one who practices Hathayoga, a system of yoga which selects the body and the vital functionings as its instruments of perfection and realisation.

īśvara (Ishvara) — Lord, Master, the Divine, God.

kāma — desire; [one of the four human interests]: satisfaction of desires of all kinds.

Karma — action, work; law of cause and effect.

manomaya puruṣa — the mental Person or Being.

mukti — liberation.

Prakriti — Nature; Nature-Force.

Puruṣa — Person; Conscious Being; Conscious Soul; Soul; essential being supporting the play of Prakriti.

rajas (Rajas) — one of the three qualities or modes of Nature; the mode of passion, action and struggling emotion; the force of kinesis.

rajasic — dominantly characterized by passion or action.

Sachchidananda — the trinity of Existence [*sat*], Consciousness [*cit*], and Delight [*ānanda*]; the Divine Being.

sadhak — a practitioner of yoga.

sadhana — the practice of yoga.

sākṣī — witness.

sāmrājya — empire; mastery of one's environment and circumstances.

Sanskara — association, impression, fixed notion, habitual reaction formed by one's past.

sattva (Sattva) — one of the three qualities or modes of Nature; the mode of poise, knowledge and satisfaction; the force of equilibrium.

sattwic — dominantly characterized by poise, balance or knowledge.

śavāsana — in Hathayoga, the "corpse posture" in which one lies on the back and relaxes completely.

svadharma — one's own law of action; true rule and way of being.

tamas (Tamas) — one of the three qualities or modes of Nature; the mode of ignorance and inertia; the force of inconscience.

tapasya — effort or austerity of the will for self-control or self-transformation.

yoga — joining, union; the union of the soul with the immortal being of the Divine; a system of discipline for attaining self-perfection through union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent existence.

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INDEX

- Action
 - illusion of 61
 - true 62
- Adverse (hostile) forces
 - and illness of the nerves 101
 - suggestions from 116-17
 - and wrong movements 58
 - cf.* Asuras
- Agitation 61, 62, 88
 - see also* Restlessness;
 - cf.* Hurry; Impatience
- Alcohol *see* Intoxicants
- America 94
- Analysis 5-6
- Anger xxii, 58-60
 - conquest of 3
 - and detachment 60
 - and peace 59-60
 - and quietude 59-60
 - and the vital 60
- Anxiety xxi, 44-49
- Ashram, Sri Aurobindo 120
- Asuras 140
 - cf.* Adverse forces
- Attitude 143-44
 - critical, and digestion 87-88
 - towards people around 160-61
- Auto-suggestion 96-98
 - cf.* Suggestion
- Awareness *see* Consciousness
- Being
 - distinguishing parts of 4, 74
 - environmental 109
 - mental *see* Mental being
 - outer xi
 - parts of x
 - physical *see* Physical being
 - planes of xi
 - subdivisions of xiii-xiv
 - vital *see* Vital being
- Body
 - and cure 89
 - vital 86-87
- Body-consciousness iii-iv, xii-xiii
 - and illness 94
 - and medicines 95
 - see also* Body; Physical, the
- Boredom 53-54
- Buddha, the xix
- Calm 1, 86
 - and detachment 25-26
 - and will 50
 - see also* Peace; Quiet
- Character
 - changing 110-11, 113
- Children
 - spontaneous trust 70
- Chinese, the 63
- Christmas xxiii
- Cocaine *see* Intoxicants
- Complexes xxviii
- Compulsive behaviour xviii, xix
- Concentration
 - centres of 134
 - and identification 147
 - with images 132
 - and the psychic 134-35
 - and solving a problem 146-47

- in work 64-65
- Conception
 - moment of xxxi
- Consciousness
 - becoming conscious of 124
 - hidden 134
 - separating, from thought 41
 - true, two main centres of 134
 - widening of 150-55
 - cf. Body-consciousness
- Consciousness (awareness) 3,
 - 4-5, 8
 - and anxiety 44
 - and changing character 110
 - of collective suggestion 114
 - and desires 71
 - of Eternity 62, 63
 - and transforming the vital 80-81
- Consciousness (state)
 - concentration to enter a new 146
 - and pain 92
- Coué, Emile 25, 96, 97
- Defence mechanisms
 - projection xv-xvi
 - rationalization xv
- Depression xxi-xxii, 56-58
 - causes of 56
 - constant recurrence of 24-25
 - and desire 57
 - habit of 110-11
 - identifying with 106-07
- Desire(s) 8, 9, 73
 - come from outside 71
 - and depression 57
 - as a disturbance xix-xxi
- free play of xxiii-xxiv
- getting rid of 71, 72, 73
- and illness 89
- indulgence of 73
- love, origin of xix
- and need 72
- rejection of 70
- and true consciousness 71
- cf. Vital, the
- Detachment (drawing back, standing back, stepping back; separateness) 8, 23-27, 123-24
 - and anger 59, 60
 - and calm 25-26, 27
 - and jealousy 68
 - and mastery 24
 - and mechanical mind 31
 - method of 136
 - and peace 26
 - and physical mind 31
 - and sensitiveness 66
 - cf. Identification
- Dhammapada 40-43
- Diet *see* Food
- Divine Will
 - and equality 28
- Doubt xviii
 - and physical mind 33-34
 - and thought control 35
- Dreams 104
 - remembering 16-17
 - and the subconscious xxviii, xxix
- Drugs *see* Medicines; cf. Intoxicants
- Ebulia xviii

- Ego
 and inferiority 64-65
- Endurance 90
 and equality 27, 28
- Energy
 spending and recovery 17-22
cf. Universal energy
- Envy 73, 103
- Equality (equanimity) 27-29, 86
 and Divine Will 28
 and endurance 27, 28
 meaning 27, 67
 and physical troubles 93
 and self-mastery 27
 and sensitiveness 67
cf. Equilibrium
- Equilibrium 87
cf. Equality
- Europe 63, 94
- European psychologists 3
- European science 103
- Faith 47, 49
 and auto-suggestion 96
 and fear 51
 getting rid of illness by 98-99
 and medicines 99
- Fatigue 9-10
 depression arising from 56
 and *tamas* 86
cf. Tamas
- Fear xxi, 50-53
 and pain 91-92
 and symptoms 93
 using will to remove 50
- Food
 effect of 93
- Force, the 1, 2, 94, 134
 and cure 139
 and defects of nature 58
 and medicines 95-96, 98-99
 and the subconscious 94, 109
 and will 8
- France 94
- Freud, Sigmund 6, 7
- Friedman, Meyer xxii
- God
 and difficulties 143
- Grace 11, 138, 148, 170
- Habit(s)
 breaking vital habits 110
 and depression 110-11
 and intoxicants 110
 and physical consciousness
 xxvi-xxvii
 and the subconscious xxix
- Haste *see* Hurry
- Hathayogin 86
- Hindu ideal
 of human life 102
- Holmes, Thomas H. xxiii
- Hostile forces *see* Adverse forces
- Humour
 and the vital 77
- Hurry (haste) 62-63
 agony of 119-20
 "hurry sickness" xxii
cf. Agitation; Impatience
- Identification 23, 24, 26
 and attack of nerves 106
 when there is disagreement
 144-45, 147-49
 and widening 150-53

- see also* Self-identification;
cf. Detachment
 Imagination
 and auto-suggestion 96
 Impatience xxii
 cf. Agitation; Hurry
 Indecision xviii
 Indians 63
 Inertia xii, xxv-xxvi
 and physical consciousness
 xxv-xxvi
 see also Tamas
 Inferiority 64-65
 Integral Yoga x, xiv
 and mental health xxxii-xxxvii
 see also Yoga
 Intoxicants 110

 Jealousy 43, 68-69
 Joy
 and the psychic 121
 and universal forces 54-56
 and will 56

 Life Change Index xxiii
 Love
 origin of desire xix

 Masochism xxv
 see also Vital, the;
 masochistic tendency
 Mastery
 and detachment 24
 Mechanical mind xiii-xiv, 31,
 34-35
 see also Physical mind

 Medicines (drugs; remedies)
 98-101, 130
 and faith 99
 Meditation 155-56
 and the psychic 119
 Mental health ix
 and change of consciousness
 xxxvi
 and Integral Yoga xxxii-xxxvii
 positive ix, xxxvii
 see also Psychological health;
 Psychological well-being;
 cf. Mental illness
 Mental illness ix
 cf. Mental health
 Mind
 calm 31-32
 disturbances associated with
 xiv-xix, 30-49
 formative instrument 96
 mechanical *see* Mechanical
 mind
 physical *see* Physical mind
 purified 40-41
 reasoning mind and fear 51
 vital *see* Vital mind
 see also Mechanical mind;
 Physical mind; Vital mind;
 cf. Thoughts
 Mukti 9

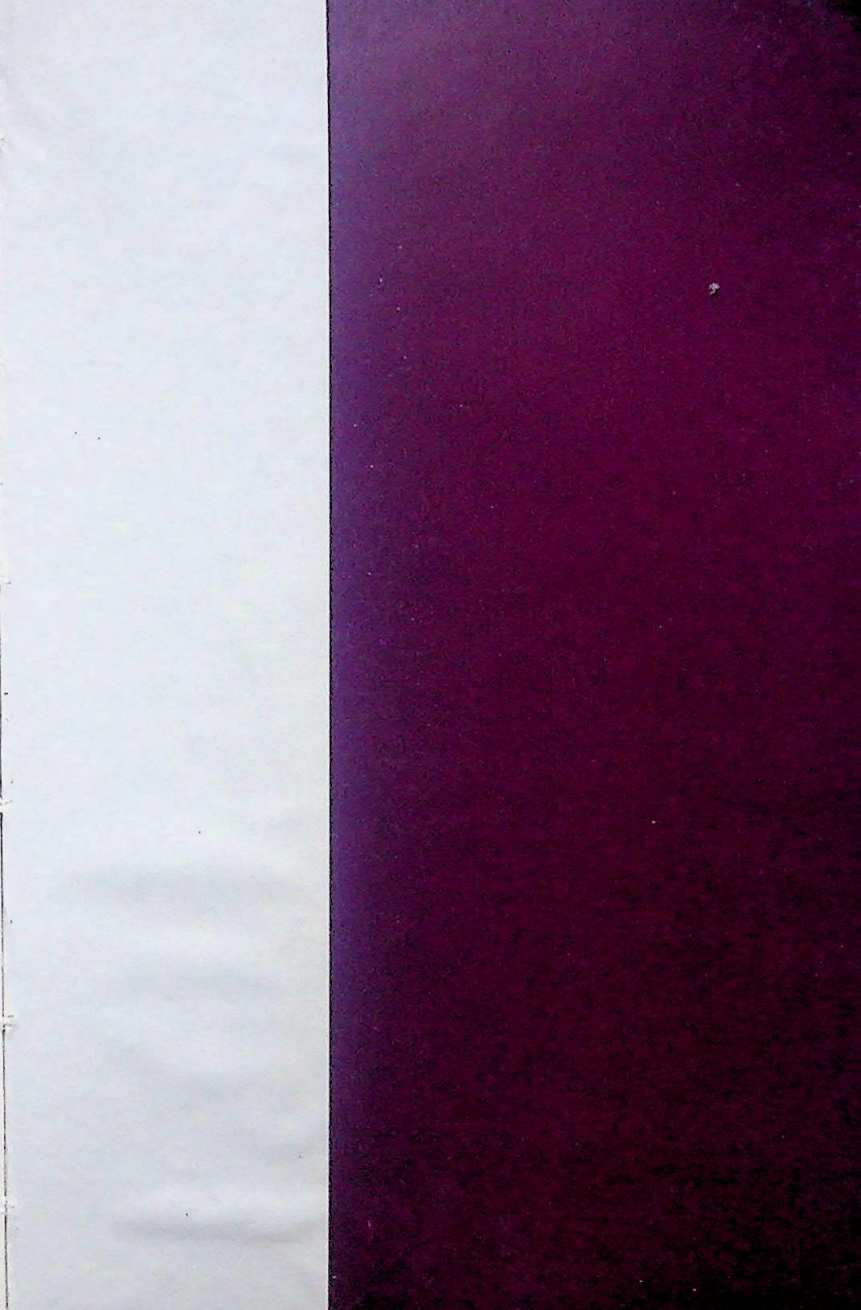
 Nerves xxvii, 1, 2
 illness of 101, 103
 recovering from 22-23
 Nervous envelope 86-87
 Nervousness
 prolongs illness 1
 Neurasthenia 103

- Observation 5-6
see also Self-observation
- Obsessive-compulsive neurosis
 xix
cf. Compulsive behaviour;
 Thoughts, obsessive
- Pain
 and consciousness 92
 and fear 91-92
 purpose of 90
 stopping 88-89
- Passivity xxv
- Peace 1, 2, 137
 in the cells 1, 2
 and detachment 26
 and getting rid of anger 59-60
 means for establishing 161-62
 and nervous disorder 106
 and overcoming tension 151
 practising inner 124
 and the psychic 119, 120-21
 quietist methods for 46
 and rest 9, 10
 things truly built in 61
 and will 7
see also Calm; Quiet
- Physical, the xi, xiii
 disturbances of xxv-xxvii,
 86-107
 vital-physical *see* Vital-
 physical
see also Physical consciousness;
cf. Body; Body-
 consciousness
- Physical consciousness
 and habit xxvi-xxvii
 and inertia xxv-xxvi
 influence on mind xvii-xix
 and weakness of will xxv-xxvi
- Physical mind xiii-xiv, xvii-xix
 buzz of 30
 and doubt 33-34
 how to deal with 31
see also Mechanical mind
- Pondicherry 103, 105
- Prakriti 25, 26, 35, 69, 71
- Projection *see under* Defence
 mechanisms
- Psychic, the / Psychic being
 and agony of hurry 119-20
 and anger 59-60
 and concentration 134-35
 contact with 120-21, 133
 and depression 57
 and desire 71
 drawing away from 122
 and fear 51
 its help 112
 and knowledge 2
 and mastery over the vital
 84-5
 meaning xxxii-xxxiv
 and meditation 119
 and mental quiet 32
 organising one's being around
 128-29
 and peace 2, 119
 and peace and joy 120-21
 psychic poise 120
 and psychological health
 119-22
 and sadhana 70
 true being 108
 and trust 48-49
 and vital interchange 22

- and well-being xxxv-xxxvii,
119-22
- Psychic quietude
and anger 59-60
- Psychicisation xxxvi-xxxvii
- Psycho-analysis 3, 6-7
- Psychological health xxxii,
xxxiv-xxxvi
see also Mental health;
Psychological well-being
- Psychological well-being ix,
xxxv-xxxvi
see also Mental health;
Psychological health
- Psychologists xxvii, 3
- Psychology
modern 6
- Purusha xxxiii, 26, 35
psychic Purusha 108
will of 30
- Quiet (quietness; quietude) 1, 86
and getting rid of anger 59-60
and faith 49
and illness of the nerves
101-02, 106
things truly built in 61
when facing a problem 47-48
and will 7
see also Calm; Peace; *cf.* Psychic
quietude
- Rahe, Richard H. xxiii
- Rancour 43
- Rationalization *see under*
Defence mechanisms
- Rejection 8, 23, 25, 73
and dreams 104
of fear 50
and suppression 70-71, 72
cf. Suppression
- Relaxation
before sleep 13-14, 15-16
methods for 150-51
true 9
cf. Rest
- Remorse *see* Repentance
- Repentance 57-58
- Repression *see* Suppression
- Rest 9-11, 86
and widening 11
cf. Fatigue; Relaxation;
Widening
- Restlessness 61
see also Agitation
- Rosenman, Ray xxii
- Sachchidananda* 15
- Sadhana
and psychic being 70
- Sanskaras xxix, xxx
- Śavāsana* 86
- Self-analysis *see* Analysis
- Self-identification
and cure of nervous diseases
107
see also Identification
- Self-mastery
and equality 27
- Self-observation 126-31
to localise consciousness
124-25
see also Observation
- Self-organisation 126-31
- Sensitiveness 65-68
- Separateness *see* Detachment

- Sex
and spiritual life 2-3
- Silence 9, 10, 61, 62
mental 31-32, 134
things truly built in 61
- Sleep 11-17
- Soul xxxiii, xxxiv, 108
as witness 25-26
see also Psychic, the
- Stammering 89
- Subconscious (subconscious),
the 6-7
and change of character xxix
and chronic illnesses xxx
disturbances of xxvii-xxxii,
108-18
and dreams xxviii, xxix
and the Force 94
and habits xxix
and intoxicants 110
and mental will 109
nature of xxvii-xxx
and the new-born xxxi-xxxii
and origins of difficulties 112
and "relaxation" 9
and suggestions of illness 94
and suppression xxviii, xxix
- Subliminal, the 6
- Suggestion(s) 94-98
and adverse forces 116-17
collective 113-14
comes from outside 95
and illness 94
meaning 94
and medicines 95
treating illness 94
and the vital world 116-17
cf. Auto-suggestion
- Suppression 72, 80
and dreams 104
and rejection 70-71
and the subconscious xxviii,
xxix
cf. Rejection
- Surrender
and anxiety 44-45
cf. Faith; Trust
- Tamas (*tamas*) xii, xxv, 10
and fatigue 86
see also Inertia
- Tantric yogi 35
- Thought(s)
compulsive 32-33
control of 35-36, 40, 43
and doubt 35
of food 38
mastery of 40, 41
observing 40, 41
obsessive 32-33; *cf.* Obsessive-
compulsive neurosis
separating consciousness
from 41
cf. Mind
- Tobacco *see* Intoxicants
- Trust 48
and anxiety 44-46
and the psychic being 48-49
see also Faith; *cf.* Surrender
- Type A behaviour xxii
- Universal energy (universal
forces; universal vital
force) 9, 17-22
and joy 54-56

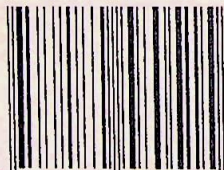
- Vidyasagar 67
- Visualization 131-34
 cf. Widening
- Vital, the / Vital being xi
 and anger 60
 control and suppression of 72
 and depression 56-57
 disturbances of xix-xxiv,
 50-85
 and humour 77
 impatient enthusiasm of 74-75
 and indulgence 72
 masochistic tendency xxiv; *see*
 also Masochism
 never satisfied 80
 and repression 108
 and soul xxxiii
 transformation of 96-110
 cf. Desire(s)
- Vital mind xiii, xiv, xv, 31
- Vital-physical xiii, xiv
 and disease xxvii
 and nerves xxvii
- Widening (becoming vast)
 methods of 150-55
 and recuperating 19
 and rest 11
- Will 7-8
 and calm 50
 in the cosmos 47
 Divine 28
 and fear 50
 and the Force 8
 higher secret 47
 and joy 56
 and medicines 88, 99
 mental 70
 mental, and the subconscious
 109
 of the Purusha 30
 and transforming the vital 74,
 84, 110
 and the vital 69-70
 weakness of xxv-xxvi
 of the Witness 36
 see also Will-power
- Will-power
 effortful versus quiet 7
 and stammering 89
 see also Will
- Witness 36
 see also Purusha
- Yoga i-ii, ix-x
 see also Integral Yoga



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